



GRANT NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2011

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Road Plan for 2012

While serving in my capacity as your Road Commissioner the City Engineer and I have identified several areas in our current road policy that could be improved upon. My goal here is to improve one of them. Before the council votes on this road policy change we would like to hear from each and every taxpaying resident in Grant. If you assist us with your input, it will give the entire council and the rest of the residents a clear picture of the true "Will of the People" on this issue. If this feedback process works well we could use it in the future to insure that we are truly representing you on the big issues.

We have several asphalt roads in Grant that have become a seasonal hazard to drive on and create a large annual expense keeping up with all the potholes. Each year the expenses go up and the roads do not get better. I believe that we should be looking down the road ten years from now. We should be deciding and planning now how we want to make the best use of our tax dollars.

My proposal would be to allow the city to participate up to 20% towards road reconstruction starting with the worst roads. The roads would be identified by the City Engineer and the Road Commissioner. The list that they create would then be approved by the city council. The neighborhoods on the list will have an opportunity to fix their roads with the city's 20% participation. If a neighborhood passes on the opportunity we will move on to the next worst road.

This proposal only includes reconstruction. **It would not fund new construction or overlays.**

There are long term savings that support this proposal. For example the 20% city co-pay would be the equivalent to patching the road over a ten year period except the city would appreciate about twenty five years of time before the potholing will reach an expensive level again. We would all be able to enjoy driving on a road in good condition for the next twenty five years for less than half the expense of maintaining these problematic roads.

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Communication is the key

All City contact information is on the web at www.cityofgrant.com or 651-426-3383



Mayor's Column

What do my City of Grant taxes pay for?

It has been said just recently that the residents of Grant may not know what their taxes pay for. What are the costs and who we pay for our services should be communicated better to the residents. Ok. I'll attempt to break it down with some pretty close numbers and percentages. Here goes...

The City gets no real substantial outside tax subsidies. Based on 2011 numbers we get approximately 11% of what your property tax statement payment is. Our expenses for building inspector, Mahtomedi /Stillwater for fire & emergency response and Washington County for Police/enforcement are 30%. Approximately 40% goes for the costs like salaries, insurance, postage, attorneys, planner, engineer, snow removal, etc. The other 30% is spent on roads for repair and maintenance.

If you like a dollar figure, that breaks down to \$396 a year to the City of Grant on \$3600 in property taxes. And my personal "how do they do that?" favorite is that we spend \$119 for road maintenance out of that amount. Why so low? Because we contract out instead of hiring employees, our road commissioner's have worked really hard managing costs and any major road reconstruction is the responsibility of the property owner.

Our Comprehensive Plan requires that we bid out our service vendors rather than have our own infrastructure. Our reserves in the bank are about 71% of our expenses. Grants assets are really just the Town Hall, ball fields and the roads. Half of Grant is in Mahtomedi school district and half in Stillwater and this causes some issues at times.

There are 64 miles of roads. Thirty three miles of paved roads and 31 of gravel roads. There are approximately 280 households on State/County/Private streets. There are 570 on gravel roads and 650 on paved.

There are also approximately 1500 property owners in the City and 1450 households and 4000 people which really are "The City". I always bring this up when I hear the City needs to do this or the City needs to do that. Any cost to do anything in the City is coming directly from the property owners. I keep pushing for gas tax money which I would put directly into the road budget but currently it requires a 5000 person City to get this funding.

Past Councils have worked to make the budget simpler than what it was and worked to keep the costs and the taxes affordable. High taxes would burden the property owners which could give rise to talk of smaller lot sizes and sewer and water in Grant which no one wants. No one I talk to.

I hope you found this educational and informative. Some may quibble with the numbers but they are close enough to show what the reality of the Cities status is. Have a great Fall!

Tom Carr
Mayor





Heritage Day Parade

The Grant Restoration Project (GRP) held its second annual tractor parade on Saturday September 10th. The parade was a complete success! In only its second year Heritage Days proved Grant's community spirit is alive and well, nearly 1000 people participated in the festivities. Participants grouped together a mile long parade featuring fire departments from both Mahtomedi and Stillwater as well as tractors and hay wagons of all size and vintages; muscle cars and antique trucks like the 1939 Cemstone truck (winner of the Most Original) and Grant resident Greg Nuss's 1923 chain driven Mack truck - a vintage wine delivery truck and winner of the Most Antique entry. "It took a year and 1000 hours to restore", Nuss said. When asked why he's restored over 30 trucks to date he says "I'm interested in preserving history, primarily pre WWII Mack trucks – they tell the American story of a generation that is nearly gone and I want today's generation to remember. Participating in a parade like this lets me share my passion and this was a great event." Sponsor Richard Paulsen is a Grant resident and owner of the White Bear Lake & Stillwater RE/MAX offices and his float was a patriotic tribute to VETS from both Stillwater and White Bear Lake. "There is something very Americana about old and vintage tractors, cars & trucks and when you put them together in a parade, especially on a patriotic weekend like this you get what we got", said Paulsen. Chris Price from the White Bear VFW's Color Guard proclaimed it as the "most genuine family friendly event of the year".

Grant is a rural area littered with small to medium sized farms and tractors are a common staple. "Celebrating our past and current heritage is what this parade is all about", proclaimed Maureen Lanoux an event coordinator. City Councilman Dan Potter believes they've only scratched the surface citing "Grant is home to many more tractors than what we've seen here today. Imagine what this would look like if all our neighbors brought their mowers, tractors and classic cars". Corey Comstock dusted off his recently deceased grandfathers 1956 Oliver so that he could partake in the parade and honor him. Paul Comstock was a lifelong Grant resident who collected 20 tractors before passing away late last year. "He collected them because he wanted to re-live his childhood roots on the farm and he really had a knack for them," said Cory. "We'll definitely be back next year, this time with our entire family". Brian and Leslie Axdahl were proud sponsors and they arrived in force, their John Deere 8210 towed their new orange VW while their model H tractor towed the old infamous orange bug. "We loved it", said Leslie, "it's important for us to participate in this community and we'll definitely be back next year. We plan on framing and displaying our Best Neighborhood award next to the brochure marketing the parade. Not only did our employees have a great time, it was apparent the crowd did as well."

Event coordinator Bill David said they fully expected growth from its inaugural event last year and although they could accommodate the large increase they were pleasantly surprised by the turnout. "Nearly a quarter of the cities residents participated or spectated in the parade" said David. Conducting a tractor parade like this you have to be prepared for some break downs, from what I hear we had three - part of the charm I guess." When asked what the biggest surprise was in coordinating a successful event like this David said "21 Grant businesses enthusiastically sponsored the event. In just two days we had to stop soliciting sponsorships because we had exceeded our goals."

The Gasthaus Bavarian Hunter was the prime sponsor providing hot dogs, brats, buns, and sauerkraut while residents were asked to bring a side dish for a pot-luck picnic. Kim Quade, owner and sponsor of the event was pleased again with the result. "I wouldn't change anything about the day", said Quade, "we're accustomed to planning big events and we'll be ready again next year." Grant Heritage Days Tractor Parade and festivities will be held again next year on the second Saturday in September.

From the Clerk's Desk

At the July 7, 2011, City Council meeting, the City Council determined the false alarm fee, per the City's 2011 Fee Schedule, should in fact be enforced. The false alarm fee notes that residential false alarms are to be billed at \$50 for 3-6 false alarms, and \$75 for 7+ alarms annually.

The City does receive a report every month from the Sheriff's Department regarding false alarms within the City of Grant. Residents need to be aware of the enforcement and check on alarms to minimize any fines they may get notice of.

Kim Points
Clerk, City of Grant

The Interim Use Permit

The City of Grant has many ways to allow things to happen via permits. We have temporary permits for work on a building, Conditional Use Permits that run with the land and grading permits that are for working on the land. All have their own niche and value to the City and to the residents. What we don't have in our permitting process is an Interim Use Permit.

An Interim Use Permit would be a catch all for residents who want to "try" something on their property and allows creativity without locking the use in for an extended period. It also can be significantly less expensive than a Conditional Use Permit process and that in itself would be a benefit. Of course these uses would be ones that can be done in the zone the property is in. City staff review and process would be required.

Permits are a necessary part of running the City to provide protection for the neighbors as well as the City. But it shouldn't have to be burdensome or cost prohibitive.

Interim Permits will be discussed in the upcoming months. I think it would be a great tool to have for the City. Feel free to sit in on the discussion!

Tom Carr

Planning Your Project

The Planning functions at the City are oftentimes misunderstood and can seem like a hassle rather than a help to your project, or the City. As the economy begins to improve more residents, developers and landowners are going to be interested in starting new projects, which makes it the best time to plan for the future. One of our objectives is to make sure residents and developers understand planning and processes that are in place to consider as you think about your project, and to make sure we're geared up and ready to make your experience go well.

As most residents are aware we recently went through a Conditional Use Permit process for the new Elementary School that will soon be constructed in the City. That project was one of the larger applications we've seen in a long time – and it gave us some great perspective as we move forward as a city, and certainly provided some insight into how we might be able to plan for our future. Although it is ultimately the City Council's job to approve or deny an application, a lot of work goes into our city's planning before the application is even in process. It is critical to have ordinances that are updated and adequately support the City's goals; fee schedules need to be detailed; key relationships with other agencies need to be established; and overall processes in place to make projects run smoothly through the city's commissions and council.

Most projects won't come close to the scale of building a new elementary school, but even the smallest projects need to go through the proper planning phases to make sure all your bases are covered, and you've got your approvals and permits in place. The City's approval process is not just restricted to understanding the City Code; in fact oftentimes rules of the State, County and Watershed Districts also play a role in the review. Careful coordination and collaboration with other agencies is a key aspect to the successful navigation through a process or application, and city staff is here to help and answer questions. In the City the Watershed Districts can play a significant role in any construction or grading you might want to do on your property, so make sure to find out what district you're in, and don't forget to contact them to verify if you need any additional permits to move forward. Many times all of the permits need to be in place before you can get your project fully approved, so plan ahead and ask questions.

Jennifer Haskamp



Mahtomedi Schools have gotten off to a great start! Our opening day was September 6 and students and staff were very eager to get back at school after a long summer of construction. No changes were made at Wildwood as a new Wildwood will be constructed in the near future, but lots of changes were made at the other schools.

OH Anderson had a new flex lab created along with new unique learners spaces where the multi- purpose room had been. The Middle School got new lighting, which is both brighter and cheaper, than the old lighting, new special education rooms, and new lockers

The High School had several changes including many new classrooms the highlight of which is the FAB LAB. This is the first high school FAB LAB in the national and the community is welcome to attend an open house for it on November 12, 2011.

George Smith field has a new athletic field, track, and new bleachers. It looks great.

All in all, it was a very busy summer of construction. But there is a lot more that is happening in the classrooms. In 2010-11 the elementary schools adopted a new writing program called, "Being a Writer." Both students and staff raved about the program and the say the students are writing more and the quality of the writing is better. The Secondary schools adopted a new Language Arts textbook series that is an improvement from the materials that were over ten years old. The most obvious improvement with the new materials is in the use of technology. We also reviewed our elementary reading program, our Science program and used technology to map our curriculum. This will allow teachers better access to lesson plans, creative teaching ideas, common summative and formative assessments, and the chance to collaborate on the best educational resources that will improve student learning.

For 2011-12, we are reviewing our elementary Math program. This promises to be an interesting review because it has been several years since our last formal examination of math. This kind of continuous improvement is something that sets Mahtomedi schools apart from so many other school districts. Our Math MCA scores are consistently among the highest in the state. The same is true with Reading and Writing. For Science, however, our students had the highest MCA scores in the state. Those kinds of results come from outstanding teachers working tirelessly with amazing and wonderful students in a very supportive community. We're very proud of what our students have accomplished.

Finally, I'd like to invite you to see, firsthand, our students in action on the stage, athletic fields, or courts. Check the district web site for specific dates, but I do hope you can see our amazing students perform in our new facilities.

Mark Larson, Superintendant Mahtomedi Schools

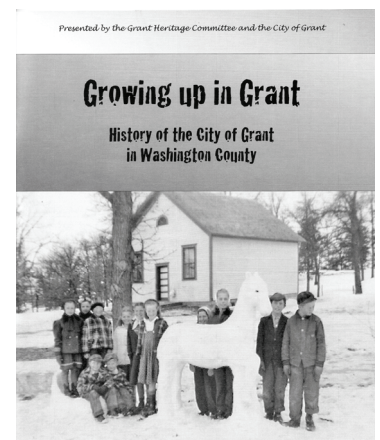
Stillwater Schools will be highlighted in the Spring/Summer Issue of 2012

If you drive past Town Hall, you will notice that the long awaited repairs are finally commencing.

The repair list is as follows: We are remediating the mold in the basement, installing a heat exchanger to maintain air quality, excavating around the building to waterproof and landscaping to prevent future water drainage problems. Taken off the list were repairs to the retaining wall on the south side of the building due to budget constraints. It is our hope that these repairs solve basement moisture issues for many years to come.

Although the council had originally planned on making these repairs in 2010, the timeline was pushed back as funding hurdles were addressed. Now that the city has obtained the needed funds from a court settlement and repairs are underway.

Scott Fogelson , Grant City Council



City of Grant
General Fund
Audited Financial Statement
2010

Revenues:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| General property taxes | \$ 873,482 |
| Franchise fees | 66,638 |
| Licenses and permits | 69,741 |
| Intergovernmental | 8,040 |
| Charges for services | 29,336 |
| Investment income | 1,206 |
| Contributions | 11,000 |
| Miscellaneous | <u>19,502</u> |
| Total revenues | 1,078,945 |

Expenditures:

Current:

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| General government | 256,863 |
| Public safety | 375,832 |
| Public works | 474,584 |

Capital outlay:

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| General government | <u>6,843</u> |
| Total expenditures | <u>1,114,122</u> |

Revenues over (under) expenditures **(35,177)**

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Fund balance - January 1 | 889,663 |
| Fund balance - December 31 | \$ 854,486 |

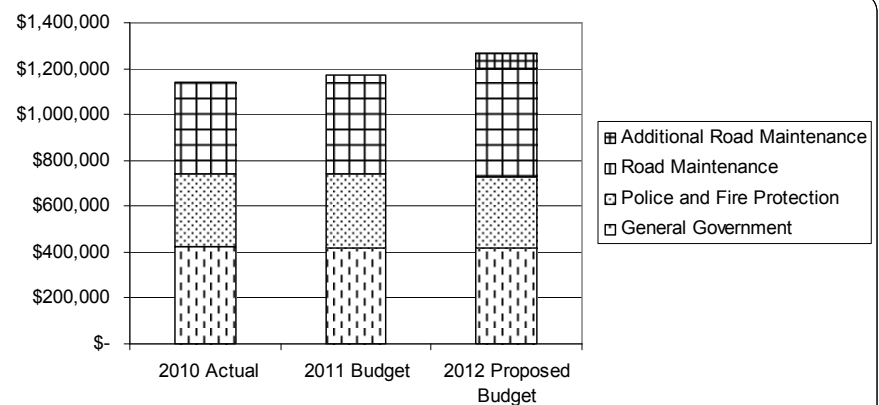
2012 Budget

Sharon Schwarz Treasurer

The City Council has diligently reviewed administrative expenses, road conditions and resident comments. Unlike the last three years there are no levy limits for 2012. The Council reviewed budget examples that included no levy increase and reduced expenditures to balance the budget compared with the 2011 budget. However, many residents contacted Council members asking for better road maintenance. Some residents asked for no levy increase and some asked for a greater increase. The Council also felt that it was not prudent to budget deficit spending again for 2012. In addition, the Council is very interested in your input. At the December 6, 2011 City Council Meeting the final levy will be adopted. This levy may be decreased by not increased compared to the preliminary levy.

Expenses

The City Council has a proposed budget increase of \$24,601 or a 2.1% increase in spending on comparable expenses. The deficit spending is included in this. In addition, the Council is asking for the public's input in making an investment in additional road maintenance that would have a ten year payback compared to potholing only. This is an amount of \$70,000 for a total increase in expenses of 8.1%. For more detailed information and how to provide feedback or asking questions about the road maintenance issue see Council Member Steve Bohnen's article on roads.



City of Grant Summary of Expenses

| | 2010 Actual | 2011 Budget | 2012 Proposed Budget | Percent Change from 2011 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| General Government/ All Other | \$ 424,308 | \$ 416,886 | \$ 418,776 | 0.5% |
| Police and Fire Protection | \$ 319,031 | \$ 321,400 | \$ 312,361 | -2.8% |
| Road Maintenance | \$ 398,935 | \$ 434,850 | \$ 466,600 | 7.3% |
| Additional Road Maintenance | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 70,000 | |
| Total Spending | \$ 1,142,274 | \$1,173,136 | \$ 1,267,737 | 8.1% |

City of Grant Preliminary Certified Levy
Approved 09/14/2011

Your Tax Dollars

| | | Percent of 2011 | Percent of 2011 | To |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| | Amount | Taxpayer Share | General Levy | Par |
| <u>2011</u> | | | | |
| General Levy (plus Fiscal Disparity) | \$ 911,803 | 97.44% | 100.00% | 21 |
| Deficit Spending | \$ 23,983 | 2.56% | 2.63% | 21 |
| Total Taxpayer Share | \$ 935,786 | 100.00% | 102.63% | 21 |
| <u>2012</u> | | | | |
| General Levy (plus Fiscal Disparity) | \$ 973,200 | 104.00% | 106.73% | 21 |
| New Road Maintenance | \$ 70,000 | 7.48% | 7.68% | 21 |
| Total Taxpayer Share | \$ 1,043,200 | 111.48% | 114.41% | 21 |

Road Plan from page 1

The funds proposed would allow the city to participate with the residents in the reconstruction of about one mile of roadway per year.

The funds to pay for this change are proposed at \$70,000.00 this year. Divided by the 2171 parcels in Grant the average cost per parcel would be about \$33.00

The best way to respond with your comments would be to use the road issue feedback form on the city's website. When you get to the city's home page <http://cityofgrant.com/> click on the word "**roads**" located under the **Road Issue Feedback Form**. Then click on the words "**online form**". Please state your name, address and whether you support the proposal to change our road policy to allow the city to pay up to 20% toward reconstructing our worst roads and the average tax increase of \$33 per parcel or not. The information will be available to all the members of the council to read before we vote.

Please contact me if you would like more details about the proposal or any of the current expenses within the roads budget.

If you have an interest in following this issue through it's due process of consideration below is a tentative schedule of dates to come and join us for discussion. Everyone and all questions will be welcomed at the informational meetings and the public hearing.

Proposed Schedule:

City Council Meeting, October 4 – Propose and discuss process

First Informational Meeting – Thursday, October 13 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Second Informational Meeting – Monday, October 24 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Public Hearing, City Council Meeting, November 1, 2011 – 6:30 pm

(determination at that time how to proceed)

Truth in Taxation Meeting, City Council Meeting, December 6, 2011

(Final 2012 Budget approved)

Steve Bohnen Road Commissioner and Councilman 612-720-7492 mncarman@aol.com



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ST. PAUL, MN

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Council Members: Scott Fogelson,
 Dan Potter, Steve Bohnen, Jeff Huber

City Clerk: Kim Points

Editor: Scott Fogelson

Web: www.cityofgrant.com

Improving City Services and Reducing Cost

In 2011 we have been focusing efforts on providing higher value to the taxpayer in several key service provider areas: road grading, snow plowing, legal services and property assessment services.

Beginning with roads, in May we selected and placed under contract a new road grading contractor, Kline Brothers, located in Grant. Our previous contract was at \$97.85/hr. in 2010 with a 3% increase scheduled for 2011, which would have put us at \$100.25/hr. Additionally, we were paying travel time to the city limits, fueling time, and breakdown time. With the new 2011 contract with the Kline Brothers, we achieved an hourly rate of \$65 for an older grader (non-articulating) and \$75 for a newer (articulating grader). Additionally, we no longer pay for breakdowns, fueling, or travel time to the city limits. This change allowed us to increase the grading hours from about 403 last year up to 642 grading hours this year for the same budgeted amount. Also, without having to pay travel time to the city, we have increased the blade down to the dirt time by at least 10%.

We also made changes to improve snow plowing services for the upcoming winter season. Our previous snow plowing contract was at \$124.50/hr. for a tandem axle plow truck, \$124.50 for a single axle plow truck, \$112.00 for a grader and \$100.00 for a sanding truck. Again, we were paying for travel time to the city limits, fueling time, and breakdowns and we also paid a mobilization fee for 7 months/yr. at \$1000.00 a month regardless of the billable time each month. In September, we executed a new contract with KEJ Enterprises of Mahtomedi and our rates this season will be considerably lower at \$95.00(-24%), \$85.00 (-32%), \$85.00(-24%), and \$75.00(-25%), respectively. Additionally, we no longer pay for travel time to the city limits, fueling time, or breakdown times and we put elements into the contract to significantly reduce the mobilization fees we were paying.

On the legal front, we solicited and received 12 proposals from qualified firms for city civil and prosecution services. As part of the process, the council elected to conduct a review with our current firm, Eckberg Lammers, Briggs, Wolff & Vierling, PLLP, to discuss the service provided, improve communication and set expectations moving forward. After this review, ELBW&V, PLLP graciously offered to reduce their Prosecution retainer from \$21,000 to \$18,500 (-12%) and their hourly Civil rate from \$140 to \$135 (-4%). In September the council unanimously approved a new contract that will carry us through 2012 for our legal services.

Dan Potter, Grant City Council