

City newsletter – July 2017

### **St. Johns Mint Festival**

The St. Johns Mint Festival will be August 11-13, 2017 with events taking place at the St. Johns City Park and also downtown St. Johns. For the event schedule at the park, please visit the Clinton County Chamber website at [www.clintoncountychamber.org](http://www.clintoncountychamber.org). For the downtown events which include a car show, beverage tent and live band, visit [www.downtownstjohns.org](http://www.downtownstjohns.org).

### **Downtown Banner Poles**

The City of St. Johns, in partnership with the Downtown Development Authority (downtown businesses), is installing banner poles in the first block of downtown. The banner poles will be used for various holiday and festival banners throughout the year. The poles will also have electricity to be used for lighting.

The City appreciates the relationship with the downtown businesses and the \$15,000 contributed toward this project goes a long way to making this project possible.

### **2018-2022 Street Millage Renewal**

Over the past several months, the City Commission and city staff have been looking at how best to continue the street improvement program. Since the program started in 2014, about 12 miles of streets along with curb and gutter and sidewalks have been improved across all quadrants of the city. This accounts for approximately one-quarter of our local streets. At the July 10, 2017 City Commission meeting, after much discussion and debate, the commission adopted a resolution authorizing renewal of the dedicated street improvement program, subject to voter approval. The levy for the renewal will be slightly different in that it will be for a lesser millage but will be in effect for five years instead of four years. As with the previous street millage, all funds can only be used for street improvements. The proposed ballot language has been submitted to the Governor's Office for approval. City residents will have the opportunity to vote on this millage renewal at the November 7th election. Stay tuned for specific information regarding the planned street projects over the next several years, which will include specific streets to be resurfaced and the year in which construction will occur.

### **City Pension Obligation**

Each year the city levies and collects general operating tax revenues based on the taxable value of the real and personal property within the city limits. These funds provide the following services to the citizens of the community: police and fire protection, elections, administration, including accounts payable and tax/utility bill collections, community development, assessing, department of public works, parks maintenance, and recreation.

These tax dollars also go toward paying the legacy retirement costs to the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS). MERS is an independent, professional retirement services company that administers our defined benefit pension plan. Using actuarial valuations performed each year, MERS

determines our required annual minimum contributions in order to fund the retirement payments for our current and future retirees. The main plan was closed in 2003 which triggered a reduction in the amortization period. Reducing the amortization has the benefit of setting a time certain for paying down the liability but also means the required payments increase significantly each year. In fiscal year 2013/2014, the general fund share of the payments to MERS was \$357,198. For fiscal year 17/18, the general fund share is budgeted at \$590,122. That is a 65% increase in 4 years. In that same time frame, property tax revenues have increased only 1.7%.

#### **Water/Sewer Billing—Ordinance Change**

In an effort to better manage our water/sewer utility and improve our cash flow, the city commission recently ratified Ordinance No. 629. This ordinance made revisions to city code 51.10 (B), Enforcement. The previous city code required that the city shut off water service for delinquent accounts. The new Ordinance gives the city the discretion to turn off water service to those customers who are delinquent on their water/sewer bill. Per the ordinance, the quarterly billing is considered delinquent if not paid within 30 days after the due date. Currently, we are working to educate city residents regarding this change. Letters have been sent to certain identified homeowners and tenants who have delinquent amounts owing.