



What's Happening?

August 2, 2007

Items of Interest from the Desk of Honorable Mayor Tom Meyer

Welcome to the first edition of "What's Happening?" I am grateful the Altoona Star has provided this forum to communicate with the citizens of Altoona regarding City activities. And, I hope the column inspires some of you to become more involved in decisions affecting your community.

Over the past year, I've concentrated on maintaining quality city services in spite of increased demands on the City budget. Budget pressures are driven, in part, by increases in labor, materials and insurance costs; financing needed projects; and paying costs necessitated by state and federal mandates.

To maintain services I've asked staff to work more efficiently and to take a creative approach to problem solving. This request resulted in cooperative agreements with neighboring organizations, reassignment of duties and a reexamination of departmental budgets to assure tax payers are getting the most from their investment.

However, while these efforts help, I believe Altoona's best hope for long-term financial stability lies in expanding and diversifying our tax base through thoughtful development.

The City's River Prairie property has been the focus of our development efforts. In the past year the City received commitments from two companies to develop both the commercial and residential components of the project. Commercial uses anticipated include retail establishments, a hotel, office space and restaurants.

Another primary goal for River Prairie is to create a place where community residents and visitors alike will want to come to spend quality time. To this end, the River Prairie Plan includes bike paths, park space and other recreational amenities. You are invited to share your opinions during a discussion on recreational space in River Prairie at 6 PM on August 23rd during the Council meeting at City Hall.

At the same meeting you can express your views regarding a proposal to establish a stormwater utility in Altoona. This would allow the City to fairly charge property owners based on their estimated contribution to the stormwater system; for residential properties the proposed charge is \$3.00 per month. Money raised would pay for both stormwater operations and stormwater projects necessitated by state mandates.

Those of you with children at Pedersen Elementary probably know the City recently completed the second year of its Real Adventures In Learning (R.A.I.L.) program. The program, managed as a cooperative effort between the City and the School District of Altoona, has been very popular with positive feedback received from both parents and children. I hope to keep this program going for many years to come.

In the coming months I have many other items I would like to receive your input on. Items for future columns include updates on bike path, roads and utilities projects; efforts to acquire grants to offset assessments for low and moderate income residents; leading edge technology in our police department and proposed water and sewer rate increases.

If you would like to see other topics discussed in this column, please email your ideas to cityhall@ci.altoona.wi.us. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Mayor Tom Meyer