

At Your Service



A Newsletter for the Citizens of Midland, Michigan

April 2006

Eastman Traffic Improvement Options *What Citizens Had to Say*

To postpone, or not to postpone?

That was the question – at least, one of them – that was considered by the 704 citizens who voiced their views on whether or not the City of Midland should make improvements to traffic-heavy Eastman Ave. between Wackerly St. and Commerce Dr.

The results from City-provided Roadmap Response Forms were almost equally split: about 49% of respondents said they wanted the City to move ahead with making changes, while 41% said they wanted to wait. Just under 10% of the respondents didn't give a preference.

When making the choice between holding off or moving ahead with improvements, citizens took into consideration three different improvement options proposed by independent traffic consultants DLZ Michigan, Inc.



Citizens Show Interest in Midland's Future in Unique Way

Nearly 60 Meetings in a Box took place throughout March as part of the City's two-year process to revamp Midland's Master Plan. Citizens met in homes, businesses and other locations throughout the community to discuss where they think Midland could be 20 years from now in terms of growth, development and character.

Even though Meetings in a Box are done, there are still opportunities to voice your views. Two workshops are planned for mid-May at the Midland Holiday Inn. Comments shared through Meetings in a Box will form discussion points for the workshops, which will take place May 17 and 18 from 7-10 p.m. To register for one of the two workshops, visit the City's website or call the Planning Department at 837-3374.

Citizens not only provided their comments – about 3,500 of them! – on the proposed options, but they also offered many other suggestions regarding Eastman Avenue traffic issues. Some of these ideas were shared during a report on Roadmap Response Form results that was presented at the January 23 City Council meeting.

Because of the overwhelming number of comments and ideas from the community, Council decided that City staff and the City's traffic consultants should take some time to analyze and explore them. Findings from that analysis will be reported at a future Council meeting.

For more information on the results of the Roadmap Response Form survey, visit the City's website (www.midland-mi.org); look for the Eastman Avenue link under the What's New / Updates heading. A hard copy of the Roadmap Response Forms report is also available at the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library's Government Information Center.

You can also view Council's discussion of this report via streaming video on the City's website. Look for the January 23, 2006, Council meeting.

Flood Safety

Many roads and low-lying areas in Midland were covered with water for several days in March after heavy rains and snowmelt raised the water level in the Tittabawassee River above the flood mark (24 feet). Because of flood events like this, the Planning Department is hoping to raise a different kind of level... the level of awareness about the dangers of flooding. Read on to find out more.

The Problem: Every year, more deaths are caused by flooding than from any other severe weather-related hazard. Why? The main reason is that people underestimate the force and power of water.

Did you know that as little as six inches of moving water can knock you off your feet or cause you to lose control of your car? And that just two feet of water can cause your car, truck or even a big SUV to be swept off of a road or bridge?

When vehicles are swept downstream into fast-moving water, the people inside of them often drown. Ironically, many drivers rescued from flood waters reported they attempted to cross a flooded road because they were trying to reach the safety of their home.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that over one half (50%) of all flood-related drownings occur when a vehicle is driven into flood water. The next highest percentage of flood-related deaths is due to walking into or near flood waters.

The Reason: Many people believe their weighted vehicle (3,000 or more pounds) will remain on the road and that a vehicle is too heavy to float. Think about that for a moment: aircraft carriers weigh 97,000 tons, and they float!

Vehicles (and ships) float because of buoyancy. In fact, most cars can be swept away in 18 to 24 inches of moving water. Trucks and SUVs do not fare much better with an additional 6 to 12 inches of clearance. In moving water, all that needs to happen is for a vehicle to become buoyant enough for the force of the moving water to push it sideways. Once swept downstream, the vehicle could roll on one side or flip over entirely. Occupants would then only have a few seconds to escape the vehicle. Tragically, many do not, and they drown.

The Solution: Many of these deaths are preventable. Whether you are driving or walking, if you come to a flooded road, follow this simple rule: **Turn Around Don't Drown**. As a safety reminder, that phrase will appear on signs that the City will post when necessary at various spots along Tittabawassee River Road and other areas that are susceptible to flooding. Don't take a chance and cross a flooded road or bridge, as you can't determine the water's depth or the condition of the road or bridge. Also, respect the road closed barriers that may be posted to warn you of impending danger.

"Scan" Below for Voting Changes

In May, city of Midland voters will have their first chance to experience optical scan voting as Midland County updates its voting system to a State-wide standard system and to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act.

While much of the voting process remains the same, there are some differences:

Ballots... Instead of the punch card ballot that voters are used to, the new ballots will be 9-1/2" x 14" or larger cardstock-type pages. You'll vote your ballot by making a mark that connects the broken arrow pointing to your choice (sample at right).



The Voting Booth... Instead of sliding your ballot into a voting booth mechanism, your voting booth will simply be a flat writing surface and you'll use a marking pen to vote your ballot.

The Ballot Can... When you're finished marking your ballot, instead of placing it into a ballot can, you'll feed it into an optical scan ballot reader.

The optical scan ballot reader is probably the most significant change in the new voting system – but it's simple to use!

Once you've marked your ballot, you'll place it in a secrecy sleeve and proceed to the ballot reader. Election workers will tell you where to wait for your turn at the reader.

(cont. on Back Page)

1-888-TELL-MORE (1-888-835-5667)

In a flood or other local emergency, where can you turn for information? Call **1-888-TELL-MORE**, the Midland County Emergency Information Hotline.

It's best to call this number instead of 911, which needs to be kept free for emergencies related to health issues, traffic accidents, police matters, etc.

When a flood watch or warning is issued, call 1-888-TELL-MORE for the latest flood levels and road closures. Another good source for this type of information is MGTV Cable Channel 5 in Midland.

More flood safety tips are below. You can also visit the City's website (www.midland-mi.org), call the Planning Department at 837-3374, or visit these sites: www.flash.org, www.srh.weather.gov, www.tadd.weather.gov.

Helpful Flood Safety Tips

1. Do not camp or park your vehicle along rivers or streams, particularly during threatening conditions.
2. If flooding occurs, immediately get to higher ground. Stay away from areas subject to flooding like low spots, floodplains or the river's edge.
3. Never let children play near flooded streams, storm drains, roads, detention ponds or ditches.
4. Never drive through flooded roadways, road beds or bridges that may be washed out under flood waters.
5. Don't drive around the barriers that warn you the road is flooded.
6. Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize potential flood dangers.

Let caution, good sense, your personal safety and your family's well being be your guides. And remember...

Turn Around Don't Drown.

Have We Got a Deal for You!

Springtime can bring with it a flood of rummage sales. Before you place a rummage or yard sale sign on your front lawn or on any property in Midland, read on to find out the City's regulations for proper placement of such signs within the city limits.



Section 8 of the Zoning Ordinance prohibits off-premise advertising signs. In addition, Section 22-2(a) of the City's Code of Ordinances prohibits the placement of signs that advertise such things as open houses, business or contractor services, and rummage sales in the public right-of-way (generally defined as the area between the sidewalk and the curb, or – if there is no sidewalk – about 15 feet or more from the curb line to a home). Exceptions to this rule can be authorized by City Council when signs are deemed to be in the public interest.

Regulations regarding sign placement have been necessary for a few reasons: one is aesthetics; the other is safety. Signs can be attractive and helpful in advertising a business, sale or event, but if used improperly, they can be distracting to motorists and a potential danger to the public as well as an eyesore in our community.

Despite these concerns, Midlanders in 2005 asked the City Council to consider changing the rules as they relate to rummage and yard sales. Citizen comments on the issue pointed out that such sales promote sound environmental practices by recycling and reusing goods that might otherwise end up in the City's Sanitary Landfill.

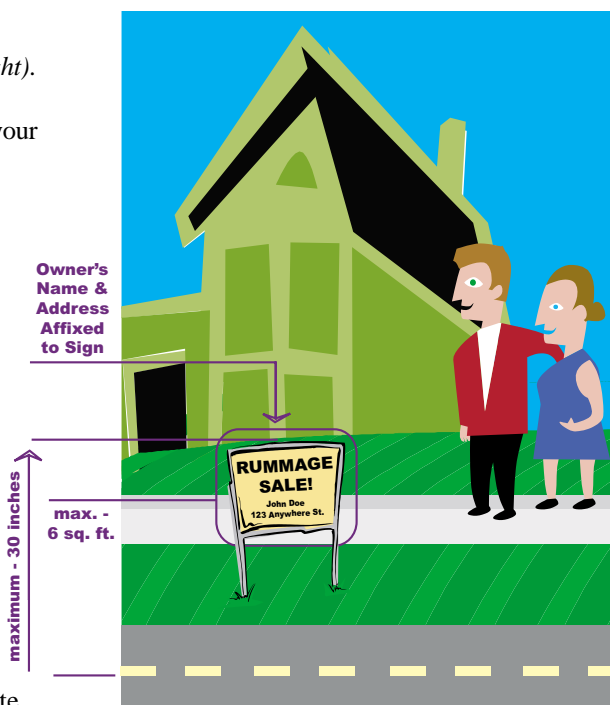
With this in mind, in September 2005, City Council adopted a resolution that allows for the placement of rummage and yard sale signs in the public right-of-way as long as the following requirements are met:

- The new maximum size allowed for signs is six (6) square feet (*see right*).
- A sign can be no taller than 30 inches from the crown of the roadway (*see right*).
- Each sign must list the owner's name and address (*see right*).
- Before placing any signs on the outlawn in front of any property other than your own, you must obtain permission from the property owner.
- Signs placed in the right-of-way may not obstruct or interfere with vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
- Rummage sale signs are allowed from Thursday at 8:00 a.m. to Monday at 8:00 a.m. during the week of the sale. By Monday at 8:00 a.m., they must be removed.

These new sign regulations will be in force until the fall of 2006, during which the City Council will consider a report evaluating the effects of this change on the community.

Citizen input will be an important part of this evaluation process. You're welcome to fill out an easy-to-use form on the City's website at www.midland-mi.org, or contact the City of Midland Building Department at 989-837-3383 with your comments.

For information on other types of signs and the City's regulations regarding their use and placement, refer to Section 22-2(a) of the Code of Ordinances, and Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance. Both can be found on the City's website.



Have We Got An Opportunity for You!

Midland City Council is seeking individuals to apply for openings on several City boards and commissions.

Applications can be located on the City's website (www.midland-mi.org), or interested applicants can call the City of Midland staff liaison for a hard copy application. The deadline to submit applications is Friday, April 28, at 5 p.m., for board terms that will begin June 30, 2006. Most terms of service are three years in length. Completed applications can be sent to the City Manager's Office, 333 W. Ellsworth St., Midland, MI 48640.

Cable Access Advisory Commission: Two openings: Citizen-at-Large and Media Professional. Staff Liaison: Ron Beacom, 837-3474

Library Board: One opening for a Citizen-at-Large position. Staff Liaison: Melissa Barnard, 837-3430

Local Officers Compensation Commission: Two openings for Citizen-at-Large positions. Staff Liaison: Selina Tisdale, 837-3310

Parks & Recreation Commission: One High School Student and Two Citizen-at-Large openings. Staff Liaison: Marty McGuire, 837-6930

Planning Commission: Open opening for a Citizen-at-Large position. Staff Liaison: Jon Lynch, 837-3374

West Main Street Historic District Commission: Three Citizen-at-Large openings. Staff Liaison: Daryl Poprave, 837-3374

Zoning Board of Appeals: One Alternate Member and Two Citizen-at-Large openings. Staff Liaison: Daryl Poprave, 837-3374

Don't Let Construction Put You Over a Barrel...

Below are City of Midland construction projects that are slated to take place in the spring and summer of 2006 in Midland. Check out the Construction Updates web page on the City's website (www.midland-mi.org) for daily updates on projects that are currently in progress or planned for a future date. Also on the site is a map of Midland that shows where projects will take place and – as necessary – suggested detour routes. Call City Engineering at 989-837-3348 with any questions.



Sign up for weekly and last-minute construction updates by subscribing to the City's e-newsletter – City Hall News – on the City's website under the "What's New/Updates" heading.

STREET	LIMITS	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED START
Airport Road	Hicks to Stark	Extension of Airport Road from Stark to Hicks	In Progress
Sturgeon Creek Pkwy.	Saginaw to Wackerly	Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Early May
Capitol Drive	Jefferson to Buchanan	Water Main Replacement, Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Early May
Damman Street	Eastlawn to Bayliss	Water Main Replacement, Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Early May
Wheeler Street	Jefferson to Foster	Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Early May
Salzburg Road	Saginaw to RR Tracks	Water Main Replacement	Early June
Moorland, Highland Dr., Kilt Ct.		Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Late May
W. Sugnet Street	Saginaw to Jefferson	Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Late May
N. Saginaw Road	Drake to Perrine	Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Mid June
Washington Street	E. Ashman to Wheeler	Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Late June
Swede Avenue	Wheeler to Wackerly	Water Main Replacement, Street Reconstruction, Curb Repairs, Asphalt Paving	Late June
Jefferson Ave./Cinema Dr.	Jefferson to Midland Cinemas to Midland Mall	Pedestrian and Bicycle Path	Early July
Waldo Road (Midland County Road Commission)	Waldo/Wheeler intersection north of U.S. 10	Center Turn Lane Additions, Traffic Signal Installation	June
U.S. 10 B.R. (MDOT)	Washington to U.S. 10	Asphalt Overlay, Ramp Modifications, Landscaping & Beautification	April
Eastman Avenue (MDOT)	Bookness to Wackerly	Coldmill & Resurface	July

Voting Changes (cont. from page 2)

When it's your turn, the election worker will remove your ballot stub, and you'll feed your ballot into the reader, which will take your ballot just like a vending machine takes a dollar bill. If there are no problems with your ballot, the reader will accept your ballot, and your voting will be complete. If your ballot is returned by the machine, you'll place your secrecy sleeve over the returned ballot, and an election worker will assist you with what to do next. Ballots will be rejected if you over vote an office, if your ballot is left unvoted, or if you cross vote your ballot.

Once your ballot is accepted into the machine, the ballot reader scans your vote, electronically saves the results, and tabulates the final vote totals after the close of the polls. All paper ballots are retained and stored according to election law retention schedules.

New technology can sometimes be intimidating, but once you've tried the new optical scan voting, you'll see just how easy it is. Just remember...

- Mark your ballot by completing the broken arrow pointing to your choice. Do not circle your selection or make your mark outside of the valid area – the space between the two parts of the broken arrow (see sample at right). The optical scanner looks for marks in the valid area only. As long as you've made your mark consistently in the valid area, you've voted correctly.
- Cover your voted ballot with your secrecy sleeve and wait for your turn at the ballot reader; only one voter should be at the reader at one time.
- If you have any questions about how to complete your ballot or you think you've made a mistake, don't hesitate to ask an election worker for assistance – they are there to help!



Practice Makes Perfect

If you'd like to give the new voting equipment a try prior to going to the polls in May, here are your chances:

- Optical Scan voting equipment will be available from 12-4 p.m. at the Midland Mall on Saturday, April 8 and 22.
- Throughout the month of April, visit the lobby of Midland City Hall from Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. to try out the new optical scan voting equipment.



At Your Service

is produced by the City Manager's Office
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