

CITY OF WISCONSIN DELLS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR 2017 BUDGET PROPOSALS

September 6, 2016

As we head directly into the path of a 2017 budget planning process, I am offering my customary proposals for our city to consider. These nine proposals are based on an overall concept of increasing the city's economic health, while providing a safe and thriving place to live.

Proposal 1: Create a business license for city businesses.

Reasoning: Our city has struggled to not only keep track of current businesses, but new operators that have opened with proper permits, licensing, and inspections. I am proposing a \$100 license fee for those not grandfathered that should cover our administrative costs of issuance.

This proposal would "grandfather" all current businesses in our city with no fee, but current businesses will be issued a non-expiring license. Any new business would be required to gain a license only upon approval of the design review committee, and showing compliance with any applicable state, federal, and local licensing and permits relative to the trade. Furthermore I am proposing our city requires any change of existing business activity, name, ownership, or location of the "grandfathered" business, must fall in compliance with the new design review standards to gain a license to operate. There is currently no ability for the city to see façade and structural improvements in aging and out of date buildings. In fact, our city has more oversight and demands on residential owners to care for their properties than our business property owners. A lack of a business license fails to protect the city's interest in seeing property improvements, and fails to protect current and future business interest of our entire city. This license should be applied to any commercial activity or structure.

Proposal 2: Remove code enforcement officer salary and management from police department and place under planning and zoning.

Reasoning: Code enforcement continues to be a struggle for the city. The code enforcement officer position currently has responsibilities shared in other duties at the police department. By having a dedicated code enforcement officer, working up to 30 hours a week and supervised directly under the city planner, should allow our city to better strengthen and improve our neighborhoods and business areas. This should not only improve safety, but also property values in the long run. Funding is currently there in the police budget for this salary, which should be transferred to Planning and Zoning. The city should strive to maintain the actual employee in this position due to the ability and success this employee has had in building relations with property owners. However,

by eliminating this position's law enforcement officer designation, there will be no expectations of required police training and shared duties at the police department.

Proposal 3: Subsidize police chief and treasurer salaries from parking utility.

Reasoning: The parking board voted to become an independent utility. With that transition, the parking utility has the ability to absorb salaries and expenses on its own without affecting the property tax levy. The police chief spends a significant amount of time managing and planning the city parking. The treasurer also has significant time investment in her fiscal oversight of the parking utility. I am proposing an annual commitment from the parking utility of \$20,000 for the chief's salary and \$10,000 for the treasurer's. This will help offset salaries currently being provided by our property tax levies, and should be properly funded by the parking utility.

Proposal 4: Privatize the cemetery maintenance duties, transition cemetery sexton position to parks department.

Reasoning: The care of Springhill Cemetery has been an ongoing concern by our citizens who have family members there. Personally, I have been disturbed at the condition of the cemetery on several occasions and the appearance of our Veteran's graves especially. I understand that the cemetery lawn care is very dependent upon the weather, and the size and number of headstones can limit one person's ability to perform all the work in one day. Therefore a team or crew from a private source could provide timely lawn care and maintenance.

Additionally, a new cemetery database management system should be implemented in 2017 that can provide immediate and online access for gravesite information and burial records. The city can look to hiring a part-time or retaining a seasonal employee, to assist with coordination of burials and assisting in the database configuration at an appropriate time allocation per month.

The city parks department is also seeking a full time employee for additional maintenance, which I have supported. I would propose moving the current sexton position to this new parks maintenance position with 70% of their duties dedicated to parks and 30% being dedicated to the care and maintenance of public spaces such as Duchess Plaza, Riverwalk, and cafe zones.

Proposal 5: Alter CDA facade grant to a two-tiered system.

Reasoning: The facade grant improvement is not being utilized by our local businesses. One of the key reasons for this remains to be uncertainty of what improvements to make. To provide clarity and assistance to our businesses, I am proposing a two-tiered grant system to be implemented in 2017. This tier system will be demonstrated by a joint informational packet supplied by the city with cooperation from MSA and ZebraDog.

Tier One: \$10,000 match grant. (4 grants available). The \$10,000 matching grant is aimed at smaller businesses wishing to remove signage and/or aging canopies to seek compliance with the Design Review Standards.

Tier Two: \$20,000 matching grant (3 grants available). This matching grant should be aimed at medium to larger businesses that may be seeking a new business model and have more structural changes in mind to fall in compliance with design review standards. Focus should be aimed at year-round dining facilities, historic building revitalization, new business concepts, or creating gathering and entertainment venues.

Proposal 6: Create River Arts District Committee

Reasoning: The River Arts District must deliver on its promise in order to be successful. Currently our city faces issues as we attempt to plan entertainment and arts in our downtown without a true committee to approve. The BID district does not have the authority to approve events, public art, and utilization of city spaces for entertainment. The Busker program is being managed with the cooperation of the WDVCB, but there are issues that affect city policy and enforcement. With no committee to guide and govern, we also face additional challenges as requests to use public areas and the Duchess Plaza for events are unfolding. This is a great problem to have as it shows the business and residential communities are responding to the desire to have more entertainment, art, and gathering spaces.

I am proposing a six-member committee that is lead by a city council member. One member will be a designated seat to the WDVCB entertainment coordinator. The four other committee members will be "at-large" and must have strong ties to the Dells area with a professional background in arts or entertainment.

The duties of this committee shall include the following:

- * Provide oversight and planning of Duchess Plaza entertainment.
- * Provide oversight of Busker program.
- * Approve public space utilization for arts and entertainment purposes.
- * Network with local, state, and national artists for events and opportunities in River Arts District.
- * Have authority over use and trademark of Dells River Arts logo.
- * Seek funding and sponsorship of cultural and historical art opportunities in public and private spaces open to the general public.

Currently this committee will work with the budgeted entertainment funding provided by the BID for 2017, but will seek to grow its own funding mechanisms through sponsored events, donations towards art projects and murals, and grants. A revenue source of utilization of public spaces for sponsored or planned events should also provide a source of funding for future projects and expansion of paid entertainment.

Proposal 7: Create city dog park.

Reasoning: A dog park has been on the city's radar for a number of years. Previous private interest has shown a substantial number of residents who would utilize, care for, and even provide maintenance to the park. I am proposing allocating \$7,500 from PRT in 2017 for the use of initial planning of a dog park in the old landfill site in our city's business park. The funding for construction and improvements can come from future budget allocations, private sponsorship, or the creation of user fees.

Proposal 8: Budget a maximum of \$50,000 from Economic Development to hire a Business Recruitment Consultant.

Reasoning: The use of a private business recruiter has been successful for many municipalities. The return on this investment for just one major retailer could be immediate. As our city gains state and regional attention for year-round events and our dedication of the River Arts District, we have seen increased interest in businesses relocating to the Dells area. The Exit 87 area, Lower Dells, Hwy. 13, and downtown are all areas primed for economic development. The use of local real estate agents can be problematic when they work for the seller and may have other lands outside of our city under contract, or have a lack of knowledge of city TIF's and resources available for incentives. By having a contracted recruiter, we can begin to market to new business opportunities, potentially from national retailers and lodging industries. I am proposing preparing an RFP this fall for hiring a business recruitment consultant to begin work in 2017, using anticipated 2016 surplus PRT to funds from Economic Development designation for this venture.

Proposal 9: Approve ATB 2% increase in city salaries.

Reasoning: Our city would not be on the right path without the dedication and talent of our city employees. While other municipalities are offering a 0 or 1% increase, I feel it's vital that we provide additional fiscal support when we can. The proposed 2% increase is estimated to impact our operating budget by \$30,000. However the proposal to subsidize the chief's and treasurer's salaries from the parking utility should offset that impact to our levy. Our city often sets its sites on future development, tourism, and financial growth. We do so with certainty that nothing can happen without our city workers dedicating themselves to efficiency, organization, and safety.

These proposals shall be discussed and vetted in the budget planning cycle over the coming weeks. I cordially invite our city residents and business owners to become involved with our budget process through these open session meetings. Attendance at government meetings may often have a stigma of uncertainty and intimidation. I assure everyone that our city welcomes and enjoys public attendance and participation. On behalf of our entire city council, administration, and employees, I welcome all to join us as we carefully plan for the allocation of your public funds in 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Landers", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mayor Brian Landers
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