



City Voice

April 2011

City of Caro
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THE MANAGER'S CORNER BY BRENT D. MORGAN



*Making our City Thrive,
Not Just Survive*

After a winter of above average snowfall, it is good to again enjoy the sun-filled days and to hear from the birds that have returned to Caro's Neighborhood

The city of Caro, along with other local jurisdictions, the states, and the federal government (and business and nonprofits) are facing an exceptionally challenging economic environment. For us, sharp declines in property tax revenue, state revenue sharing, and proposed legislation eliminating personal property tax serve as the unfortunate backdrop for the spring. Consequently, the city is faced with the necessity of making painful decisions that will affect employees, residents, and businesses alike.

I can assure you the city of Caro has positioned itself to thrive through this severe economic downturn rather than just survive. However, the real difference is that we can't be planning for a return to normal. Instead in our decisions we need to be laying the foundations for a sustainable future.

The city of Caro staff, administration and council have been working together on this foundation a brick at a time over the last 30 years. Over the last two years we have reduced the city's workforce by five (5) Full Time Equivalents and one (1) halftime. This was done without layoffs and equates to an approximate 18% reduction in the city workforce. Numerous

intergovernmental agreements and contracts exist such as: contracting with the Tuscola County Equalization Department to perform assessing services for the city; a Caro Fire Department that contracts with five (5) townships for fire service; and partnerships with local governments for the Economic Development Corporation, Airport Authority and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

In essence, all of this equates to compounded savings over the years, an increase in effectiveness and efficiencies in city services or to be put in "layman" terms doing more with less. However, we are constantly reinforcing the foundation by leveraging grant dollars, exercising fiscal prudence, and striving to go beyond our current service baseline of services we provide to residents.

As the sun-filled days return I encourage residents to utilize the numerous amenities the city has to offer such as our park system, traditional downtown and our brush pick up program. Like the birds returning to Caro's Neighborhoods you will be amazed at what we have thriving.

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A WORD FROM THE CLERK BY KAREN J SNIDER, CMC



I love how the seasons change and that is one of the reasons I enjoy living in Michigan, specifically the City of Caro. My dog loves it even more. When you let him outside he comes in all muddy. He has mud on his face, his body and caked to his feet. Yup, it is called spring. After the winter we have just had, I can only smile and clean up the mess.

This is the time of year that residents are thinking about filling their swimming pools. Remember that if you have a fairly large pool, you may want to contact the water department at 673-2226 to get a meter read before and after filling your pool. There is a \$15.00 fee for each read but you will not get charged for the sewer usage of the water used to fill your pool. Remember, sewer is charged based on water consumption. You may want to talk with Charlie Sundblad, DPW Superintendent regarding a separate lawn meter if you do a lot of outside watering or washing your vehicles. He can be reached at 673-2571. There are initial costs, however; over the long run you can save money.

The 2010 official census results are expected out the end of April. Watch the Caro website at www.carocity.net for updated information.

Reminder to residents who pay their utility bills through third party pay, please change the name from the Village of Caro to the City of Caro.

The City of Caro will be having an election on November 8, 2011. It will be a non-partisan regular city election and held at the Caro Municipal Building. The mayor and three councilpersons seats will be open. The mayor is a two year term and the councilpersons is a four year term.

Last but not least, Congratulations to Mike Henry, City Council member, for being chosen as the Caro Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year.

GREETINGS BY TOM STRIFFLER, MAYOR

TAXES, TAXES, TAXES

Did I get your attention yet! Did you know that the millage rate for Caro (city) taxes has not gone up in over 30 years? A millage is the amount of taxes we pay per \$1000 in Taxable Value on our property.

- In 1981 Caro property owners paid 17.1576 mils.
- In 1991 Caro property owners paid 17.2 mils.
- In 2001 Caro property owners paid 16.1643 mils.
- In 2010 Caro property owners paid 16.16436 mils.

While property values and the cost of living have gone up most years, the RATE of Caro taxes we pay has remained the same or gone down. This is a great compliment to our administration, staff and council's over the past 30 years. They have creatively learned how to operate on the millage we pay by using federal and state grants, low interest loans and saving for projects and equipment to avoid borrowing and paying high interest rates. Your current Council and staff will make every effort to CONTINUE to live within this same millage even with property values in decline.

You have probably heard about the Governor's proposal to reduce revenue sharing paid to local governments, and that some of the reductions may be tied to reducing the cost and combining services of local governments.

DID YOU KNOW?

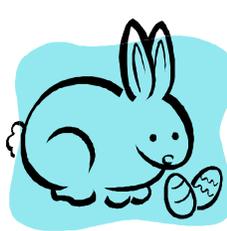
- Current Caro city employees DO NOT get a defined benefit pension. They do get a contribution to a retirement plan, but not a guaranteed pension. This helps the City know each year what our costs will be without guessing how much pensions will cost. (By the way past pension obligations are fully funded. There is no significant unpaid pension obligation.)
 - Caro does not pay retirees health care costs, and current employees contribute to their health care insurance costs.
 - Caro's elected officials DO NOT get any pension or health care benefits, do not get extra pay for extra meetings and most boards and commissions of the City are unpaid volunteers.
 - Caro has reduced 5 full time and 1 halftime employees in the last year and a half without having to layoff anyone.
- (con't on pg 3)*

(Greetings continued)

- Caro's Fire Department contracts to 5 townships for fire service. This saves all of us money by spreading the high cost of reliable equipment and still provides great service. Our firefighters are, paid on call. This means that they are not full time employees waiting at the station for calls, but have regular jobs and respond when called to a fire.
- Caro shares recreational facilities with Caro Community Schools for swimming and tennis, and cooperate in recreational programming.
- Caro contracted with Tuscola County Equalization Department to provide assessing service for City property. This avoided having to hire an assessor and allowed the county to spread some of their equalization fixed costs.
- Caro's sewer department provides sewer service to Almer and Indianfields townships. The water and sewer departments must fund themselves rather than rely on general tax dollars to pay for these services.
- Caro partners with other local governments for the EDC, Airport Authority, and for Brownfield and Energy Grants .

Overall, we try to be sure that Caro local government is the most efficient use of tax dollars that it can be. There is always room to improve, but we try to avoid the high cost "horror stories" that you hear about on new broadcasts. The key to this is "staying tuned" to the needs of our residents.





City offices will be closed on
Friday April 22, 2011

Have a safe and
Happy Easter!

PUBLIC WORKS HIGHLIGHTS BY CHARLIE SUNDBLAD DPW SUPERINTENDENT

I hope that everyone is ready for spring like we are at the DPW. We are doing our best to keep up with the potholes so if you notice any that we may have missed please call. As a reminder, in April, Richfield Entities will start yard waste pickup. Remember to put yard waste in containers marked with an "X". The City does not allow raking or putting of grass clippings, dirt, etc. into the gutters. Also, in April we will start chipping brush. Remember that we only do it on the first Monday of the month and that the last Monday will be in November. If you need a copy of the brush policy you can pick one up at the Municipal Building. Hydrant flushing will take place the week of April 11th. There will be a notice in the paper and on the radio.



ORDINANCE ENFORCEMENT BY JERRY THORP

The calendar says Spring is NEAR!

With the melting snow banks we see things that may have been hidden all winter. Take note and please remove any thing that may generate a "notice" from my desk.

A reminder also, that with spring comes grass and weed growth which also comes under the scrutiny of this Officer.

Yard and garage sales need permits from the city office and have some time limitations that go with them.

Any of the above items may bring questions to your mind. Please call me on Tuesday before noon, (9-12) at my desk (673-1373) with any questions or concerns about ordinances and enforcement and I will be glad to respond to your concerns.

GOODBYE WINTER????

CARO FIRE DEPARTMENT BY CHIEF DAVID MATTLIN

Spring is almost here and now is a good time to review some tips on severe weather awareness. When the National Weather Service posts a Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado



Watch, this means conditions are favorable for the formation of those types of storms. As citizens, we need to be aware of those situations and keep a little extra eye to the sky and ear to the radio or television. If conditions worsen, there may be a Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado Warning issued for our area. When that happens we really need to seek shelter in the lowest part of our residences, preferably the basement or interior room away from windows. In the case of a Tornado Warning, the warning siren blows a steady 3 minute tone. The all clear siren will blow 3 short blasts on the system when the danger from Tornados has past. In our area, the potential danger from straight line winds is significant and could result in fallen trees, power lines other debris blowing around.

There is going to be a Severe Storm Spotter Class offered by the Tuscola County Office of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service on Thursday, April 28, 2011 from 7:00PM-9:00PM at the Tuscola Technology Center on Cleaver Rd. in Caro. To register for the class all you need to do is call (989) 673-5181. There is no charge for this valuable training.

Testing of the Tornado Sirens will resume on Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 10:00AM and continue through November of 2011 on the first Wednesday of the month at 10:00AM.

As always, if you have any questions please call the fire department business office at 673-2002.



THE CITY OFFICES
WILL BE CLOSED ON
MONDAY MAY 30, 2011
IN OBSERVANCE OF
MEMORIAL DAY

WASTEWATER TREATMENT BY CURTIS WELLS WWTP SUPERINTENDENT

Your Caro area wastewater treatment plant staff are proud to serve the residents. We are still learning some things about our new facility that will help to ensure its efficient operations in the future.

It is spring time and we all get the fever to do some spring cleaning around our homes. We would like to remind everyone that hazardous wastes are not good for the treatment plant. We would also like to remind everyone that your Tuscola County Recycling Center is hosting a

“Household Hazardous Waste/Clean Sweep Collection” on Saturday May 7th from 9am till Noon. You must have an appointment for this event so call 989-672-1673 to make one. You can also go to www.tuscolacounty.org/recycling/events.php to view more information. Please take the time to check the web site out because they are also having a Mercury Health Thermometer Exchange that is also beneficial to your Caro area wastewater treatment plant.



We would like to thank you again in advance for all of your cooperation.

GARAGE SALE PERMITS

It's that time of year when we begin to think of all of the things we need to clean out of our closets, our basements, and yes the garage! With this also comes garage sale time. Please be advised city residents are required to purchase garage sale permits. Permits are \$1.00 each and you must have one permit for each sign you are placing and they are good for three (3) consecutive days. Please remember your signs MUST be placed on private property; they are not allowed in the right-of-ways, or on electrical or utility poles. You may purchase your permits at City Hall, 317 South State Street.



