

MAYORAL UPDATE 2ND QTR 2021

It was March when I sent out the last update and now half of 2021 is over. I remember my grandma telling me how fast time seems to fly the older you get...I'd have to agree with her. It has been a very busy and exciting time for the Village these past three months. We spent most of the time the past couple of months focusing on the pool, streets and police department.

April Highlights: On April 1, Gregg Like, assumed the part-time Village Administrator position. Gregg immediately became immersed into the projects within the Village. Over the past three months Gregg has worked diligently on grants, streets, zoning, infrastructure and all other aspects of running a village. One of Gregg's first projects was to review and update the Village's insurance policies. Gregg determined that none of the vehicles that were sold to NWWSD in 2016 were ever removed from the policy. Also, the new 2019 leased PD Explorer had never been added to the policy. Thank goodness there had never been an accident! Gregg spent many hours upgrading equipment from the street shop and park as well. Gregg and I met with the insurance representative to review, upgrade and finalize a comprehensive and accurate policy for the Village. With all the changes and upgrades the policy is still a little less than what we were paying before. Melissa Patch, Village Fiscal Officer, and Gregg also met with the Health Insurance Representative to ensure we are up to date and receiving the most cost effective premiums.

It has been a blessing having Gregg in the office to handle so many of the daily items as well as planning future long term projects for the Village. Gregg is very thorough and I see and hear him reaching out to experts in different areas to make informative, accurate and decisive decisions for the betterment of McComb.

The Village pool was originally projected to only be open on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and holiday Monday's throughout the summer months due to budget restraints. We have such a wonderful amenity within our Village that many other villages do not have and what a shame it would be to only be open on the weekends. Council voted to sell (by bid) several older and unused vehicles. Some of the vehicles had already been voted on by previous council to be sold but were never advertised for bids. Bids were accepted for all five vehicles. With the money from the sales, council approved using the funds to open the pool every day of the week. Initially, the pool was scheduled to open on Memorial Day but instead opened on June 2, 2021. The governor officially lifted the COVID restrictions on June 2 and it seemed foolish to be open one day with all the COVID restrictions. We have been very fortunate to obtain qualified life guards and a manager as many of the surrounding areas are struggling to remain open due to a staff shortage. The pool offers private Pool Parties from 6-8. If you are interested or know of someone who would like to schedule one, please contact Steven McKinney, the pool manager. What a fun way to have a memorable birthday party or reunite with old friends. A special thank you to several village residents from the McComb EDO and Church of Christ who spent a couple evenings cleaning up around the pool – raking, weed whacking, mulching and planting flowers! Your work did not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated!

As most residents are well aware the infrastructure in the Village is in need of major upgrades. This is very evident with all the work NWWSD has performed on the water and sanitary sewer lines within the Village. The Village is responsible for the storm water lines. Within the past four years council hired Peterman and Associates to devise a master plan for the Village in regards to storm water. They divided

the village into nine zones with plans for upgrading the system. The most critical zone was the area from W. South Street north past Hearthside to Rader Creek. Thus, the Church Street Interceptor project was initiated. Poggemeyer Design Group out of Bowling Green has been contracted to engineer and apply for all permits and grants to begin this project. The first phase of the projected \$1,300,000.00 project would start at Rader Creek and work up Church Street to the railroad. This project would encompass replacing the main storm water tile and many laterals on side streets connecting into the main. Projects like these are very complex and costly especially dealing with EPA and other restrictions such as easements, detention/retention ponds and ditch maintenance. We are very fortunate to have a qualified and respected engineer group assisting us. Council will have many decisions and meetings as this project gets finalized. I'm sure we will have several public meetings and hopefully citizens will attend to learn more about the improvements to provide better quality of life for future residents within the Village. Our goal is to use as little of tax payer's money for the projects and apply for several grants to help offset the costs. With the American Rescue Act (COVID money) the Village is scheduled to receive money over the next two years to be used for below the ground infrastructure requirements. I'm sure this will help as well.

I contacted the Hancock County Engineer, Doug Cade, to visit and spend some time in the Village to address our streets. I wanted to find out what the County Engineer did as well as address the streets. Doug, Gregg and I drove throughout the Village looking at possible paving projects. I was hoping that we might be able to tar/chip some of the roads but unfortunately, they were beyond that option and would most likely need to be ground down (due to just always putting more pavement on top) and repaved. As this council and administrator look to develop long range goals for the Village. Doug did provide us with a couple of interns from his office to visit the Village in May and study each road. The interns will log each street and prioritize them to give us an idea for when we will need to address each one. This is something the Village currently does not have and should help to budget and plan for the future.

You may have noticed the new sign at the park. Council worked on this project for a couple of years. It is nice to officially have it installed. I read several comments on social media in regards to the name of the park. I found what Deb Ewing had to share quite interesting about its history. Deb is quite the history buff about the Village. I think it would be fun to have a walking history tour of the Village in the near future and I'm sure Deb would be willing to share her knowledge.

April 15, was also a noteworthy day for the Village as Sgt. Crawford resigned, effective immediately. As I have stated before safety for the citizens of the Village is one of my top priorities. With no local officer to patrol the Village a special council meeting was immediately set and Sheriff Heldman and Lt. Price presented how the HCSO (Hancock County Sheriff Office) works with neighboring villages to provide additional contracted coverage above and beyond their regular patrol. Council did vote in May and an official contract was signed with the HCSO for 20 hours per week of additional coverage above and beyond the normal coverage. Coverage will be on every shift of the day and a report will be given to me to share with council each month of items addressed by the HCSO. I know I have seen them in town almost daily. If you have any specific concerns that need to be addressed, please contact me or call the sheriff office directly.

One of Council's goals is to have more citizens be a part of the meetings and know what is happening in the Village. Technology is a wonderful thing and the younger ones seem to be able to make it look very

easy. We have tried to record and post the meetings on our web site. A couple have made it there, but we are also having some issues with the transfer due to the meeting length. Please be patient as we work to make this available for every meeting.

We also updated the job descriptions for the Utility Clerk and for the Village Administrator. Both still included items to be addressed when we were responsible for the water plant.

May Highlights: Obviously, April was a very busy month and I'm just sharing the highlights. As I noted many of the neighboring villages and townships offered a spring cleanup I felt it might be something to offer in McComb. The VFW was gracious in permitting us to have a dumpster located in the stone parking lot. Both street employees, Billy and Jared, were there to assist citizens to unload and load items in the dumpster. However, as the day went on very few citizens took advantage of the opportunity. We felt we had advertised the event and really looked forward to helping homeowners within the Village the opportunity to take advantage of cleaning things up at no cost to them. I did hear a few comments about the items that were listed that could not be brought. However, they were the same items listed in all the neighboring places and restricted by the landfill. I would like to offer this service in the future if citizens will take advantage of it. Please share your thoughts and suggestions to make this work to help keep our community clean.

Our Utility Clerk, Hayley, and myself set up over thirty-five bicycles that had been stashed in the basement of the fire building. Most were found and never claimed bikes. Some dated back to 2007. The auction was set as a silent bid and each bicycle had a tag for individuals to write their bid on. It was a beautiful Saturday morning and those that did come were able to leave with a very inexpensive bike. One gentleman bid for all remaining bikes and we were happy to assist him in loading them up. The sale netted \$147.00 and the basement is now clean.

We submitted a grant to improve several of the shelter houses and other smaller structures currently at the park. This was submitted as a Community Development Block Grant with the assistance of Poggemeyer Design. Unfortunately for McComb, we did not receive the grant as the money was awarded to Jenera and Mt. Blanchard.

We have submitted another grant through Nature Works for items to be replaced and updated at the park. We have our fingers crossed hoping we will be fortunate to receive this grant to replace the sand under each play set with pelletized rubber and to replace the wooden split rail fence.

Two officers with the McComb Economic Development organization, Tyler and Kari, shared with council the opportunity for two possible housing complexes to be built in the Village. This would be a great opportunity for McComb. Stay tuned for more updates!

The Fiscal Officer and Administrator also shared with Council information regarding the office copier. The copier has been leased for many years and the lease was to expire. Together, they looked at the cost of lease vs. owning for a period of five years. It was determined the cost to purchase would have a potential savings of \$7,867.20 over the five-year period. Council voted to let the lease expire and to purchase one. This also includes a maintenance plan as did the lease. Again, this is just another example of the commitment to long-term planning and finances.

At an Emergency Meeting in May council passed an Ordinance to send K9 Agi to K9 Hero Haven in Pennsylvania. To find information regarding the facility check out their website at

www.K9HEROHAVEN.ORG Agi does not live in a kennel but lives in the main house with several other former police and navy seal dogs. He is on the go almost daily visiting with veterans, rest homes, community functions, schools and just enjoying life. Council spent many hours researching and determining what the best placement would be for him where he could actively serve the public in some form of working role since he was found fit to work. Ultimately, K9 Hero Haven was determined to be the best.

As many citizens have noticed the military banners on the downtown poles, I'd like to thank Jared Schroll for organizing and offering to implement this project for the Village. However, as we found out, we needed more poles due to citizens wanting to purchase more banners. The current plan is to remove the flags and add additional banners. However, we still do not have enough poles and unfortunately, the black poles do not support hanging two banners on them. We have started a list of people who would like to purchase a banner for next year. McComb certainly has had many military persons who have served our country in the past and continue to serve.

Although, we are very fortunate to have the HCSO in our village we also recognized the need for one of our own. Council gave me the authority to advertise for a full-time officer. I worked with other neighboring law enforcement agencies to create an application specifically for the PD. The position was posted and resumes started to arrive for the June 14, deadline.

June Highlights: Council and myself are well aware of our poor streets within the Village and another goal is to begin to upgrade them. However, in the past it seems like many of the streets would just get paved and then would need to be tore up for some reason. Our goal is to pave the poor roads and hopefully, not have to tear them up the next year. W South Street has been in disrepair for the past several years. The areas where saddle replacements were installed has been patched more than once. This street will be in phase two of the Church Street Interceptor project and therefore it was decided to pave only the patched areas as opposed to wasting money to pave the entire road. We were able to use the County Permissive Tax fund to cover the cost of paving Smith St, Todd St and repair W South St. The total cost was around 90,000.00. Permissive tax is money that is collected from license plates at the county level. McComb had not requested their allotment since 2010.

Currently, there is no contract or lease agreement between the PMP, NWHJFD and the Village. The Village owns the building and who is going to pay for repairs, maintenance and other items is often in question. In January, I asked all fiscal offers for each entity to provide the past expenses for the previous two years and the first half of this year. In July, all the building occupants plan to meet to devise an agreement/lease.

Most of June has been preparing for the hiring of a police officer for the Village. The interview team consisted of Council President, Joe George; Village Administrator, Gregg Like; Chairman of Safety Committee, Midge Ewing-Brown; former McComb Chief of Police, Steve Smith; and myself. After many interview questions, discussions, second interviews and reference checks I am very pleased to announce the new McComb Chief of Police, Tammy (McCabe) Blunk. Chief Blunk is a McComb graduate and her parents live in the Village. She has served on the Ottawa Police force for 18 years. She will assume her new position mid-July. Please help to welcome her back to McComb as our Police Chief.

Happy Fourth of July!

Cathy Schroll, Mayor