



CITY OF OSAWATOMIE

MUNICIPAL NEWSLETTER

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DEAR OSAWATOMIE,

BY SAM MOON

(PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER, CITY MANAGER'S ASSISTANT)

As the midnight bells rang on New Year's Eve, we were all wishing 2021 would be the cool, calm, and collected cousin to the pandemonium that was 2020. However, it quickly started to look like they were just two sides of the same coin. Collectively, we've already been through quite a lot this year. I know we're all suffering from a little pre-springtime slump; we're antsy and uncomfortable and ready for something new and exciting.

Well, then I have good news for you! There are some serious movers and shakers in our community working hard to bring a phenomenal next season to Osawatomie. We've got new businesses cropping up on Main Street, new housing builds on the horizon, a downtown revitalization being planned, outdoor recreation opportunities being built, and so much more. Plus the Midway Drive-In is going to be open again! That alone is cause for celebration, right?

With so much going on in 2021 and beyond, we're going to be distributing a lot of information out to our website, onto our social media, and into our newsletter(s) to keep you up-to-date on all the activity. If you want to get involved in Osawatomie's next chapter, "Like" us on Facebook, subscribe to our Weekly Update digital newsletter (osawatomieks.org/newsletter) and be on the lookout later this summer for when we'll be hosting a variety of public information sessions to gather feedback during our downtown revitalization planning process. Attendance at City Council meetings is also a GREAT way to stay informed of what's going on in our hometown and get answers to all sorts of questions.

And if you ever have a question about City business but can't make it to Council, please don't hesitate to reach out to us directly through our website, email, or a good old fashioned phone call. Don't rely on the grapevine for your news -- get it straight from the source!



A self-pay kiosk is now available outside our Utility Office located at 509 5th Street. The kiosk is available 24hrs and accepts cash, check, and card payments.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Ongoing City projects and improvements

Information on the February Energy Crisis and Utility Billing

Community Spotlight: The Osawatomie Public Library is "Glowing Up" in 2021

CITY HALL | 439 MAIN STREET | 913-755-2146

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REMINDERS

City Offices and facilities are RE-OPEN to the public and rentals are resumed. Masks are currently required for visitors and staff.

City Council meetings are held on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. Agendas are available on our website (www.osawatomiex.org) and in the lobby of City Hall!

Spring Safety Tip Make a severe weather plan with your family and practice it often. Keep an emergency kit in your designated storm shelter that includes bottled water, batteries, and flashlights.

Planning Sustainable Places

In the fall of 2020, the City of Osawatomie was awarded a Planning Sustainable Places planning grant through the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC). This planning grant helps us hire and work with an outside consultant and design team to reimagine and plan for a revitalization of our downtown district and find new and practical ways to reconnect our community.

A committee made up of community stakeholders, City staff, and Council members is working with our chosen consulting firm, Architect One, to begin planning efforts. We're hosting a variety of community listening sessions and public feedback forums in the coming weeks and months, and will have informational material available downtown at "Our Meeting Place" this summer for the public to browse at their leisure between more formal feedback sessions.

We'll talk about everything from bikes and bike lanes to wayfinding signage to designing community spaces in our downtown (like outdoor dining, a dog park, or an interactive plaza).

Help us imagine what the next generation of life and leisure in Osawatomie looks like!

JOHN BROWN CONTINUES TO TAKE CENTER STAGE ACROSS THE WORLD

John Brown Museum Curator Grady Atwater has had a busy pandemic. Even though the Museum's doors were closed for public health and safety, Atwater was busier than ever over the last 12 months promoting our great history to a multitude of audiences across the country.



Among his many activities, a few standouts include finalizing the Museum's status as one of eight Kansas sites on the Kansas African-American History Trail, an interview with Emilee Rittman of KCTV5 about John Brown and the Showtime limited series "The Good Lord Bird" that premiered in 2020, an interview for an article in the February 2021 issue of the Kansas City Pitch about John Brown and Osawatomie's continuing legacy, a speech to the Civil War Roundtable and other Civil War-related historical groups, and several lecture series with students of all ages, like from the Barstow School and Osawatomie Middle School.

Upcoming events for Atwater include a lecture at the Newton Public Library entitled "John Brown, Image and Reality" on March 16th. He's also thrilled to be able to host school tours at the Museum again, after a year of being closed to the public. Several large groups have already scheduled a springtime visit, including a group of nearly 60 students coming from Wichita.

Atwater also writes a weekly "History and Heritage" column for the Miami County Republic and works as an adjunct history and social sciences instructor at the Miami County campus of Fort Scott Community College.

To contact Grady Atwater, email gatwater@osawatomiex.org or call 913-755-4384. The Museum is open 10:00am - 5:00pm Tuesday through Saturday, or by special appointment.

City Officials continue to work toward a solution regarding the mid-February cold snap that caused price spikes in electric and natural gas utilities across the entire Midwest. The City of Osawatomi received around \$700,000 in charges for a two-week period of severe weather, which is roughly the cost of six to eight months during a regular year. The issue has been a primary topic of concern at the February 25th, March 2nd, and March 11th meetings of City Council, and officials continued their discussion of the electric spike charges at the regularly scheduled March 25th meeting.

The City of Osawatomi was glad to receive a \$700,000 ultra-low-interest loan from the State's newly introduced City Utility Low-Interest Loan Program, which was designed for use by municipalities facing exorbitant utility bills as related to the February severe weather. This loan allows the City to pay off the \$400,000 in higher interest no-fund warrants (NFW) as originally issued for the first portion of the charges due, and the City is able to stretch out repayment up to 10 years as compared to the one-year repayment for the NFW. This more forgiving repayment opportunity allows us to keep the monthly impact to consumers as low as possible.

After a presentation from City Manager Mike Scanlon regarding several proposed repayment options, and after listening to feedback from the residents in attendance, Council voted to approve a proposed 36-month framework repayment calendar. A final version of the plan will be presented and voted on at the April 8th meeting before implementation can begin in mid-April. The loan program timeline and necessary actions from City Council prevented these changes from appearing on the bill arriving next week as originally stated in a March 1st release. Once a plan has been established and approved by Council, the City will notify customers of their payment options.

A complete timeline of this process and actions taken, including the proposed framework calendar, is available on our website at www.osawatomieks.org/February-utility-timeline. For a paper copy, just stop by City Hall.

The City of Osawatomi and all its associated staff members, community partners, and other advisory groups are grateful for the support and understanding of residents during this incredibly trying time. This has been a period of exhaustive new information, record-breaking speed of legislation, and complicated financial mathematics. The City is proud to have been on the forefront of many of these statewide conversations and spearheaded many of the solutions being implemented across the region.

Utility Billing: What Now?



The League of Kansas Municipalities released this graphic in late February to help explain what caused the energy crisis and subsequent billing issues.



City Manager Mike Scanlon briefly spoke with Fox4KC News about the utility billing crisis the City was facing, and what the hopeful solutions would be. The interview aired March 9th, 2021, and is available at www.fox4kc.com.

SPOTLIGHT | Osawatomie Public Library

New Library Director Dr. Morgan Crabtree and Assistant Director Amanda Murphy are ready to reintroduce Osawatomie to its greatest resource with new programming, new material, and fresh ideas for 2021 and beyond!



What upcoming event or program are you most excited about?

Morgan: There is lots to be excited about, including the summer reading program and the return of Third Thursday crafts. However, we have a fun educational program coming up - an Abraham Lincoln impersonator event on April 16th at 6:30pm at the City Auditorium that definitely has us excited!

Amanda: We have some really cool presenters lined up for summer reading. I'm especially excited about the exotic zoo and the skateboarding parrot!

What BIG goal do you have for the library moving forward?

Morgan: We have lots of big goals. One of our biggest, though, is to truly make the library a place to belong for all ages, including teens.

Amanda: My BIG goal is to get the library completely open and programming happening inside again. We have missed our patrons so much. Especially the kids!

OPL has quite the catalog of material and equipment. What's something you have available for use that people might not know about?

Morgan: Maybe the most useful thing we have available that people don't know about is a sewing machine. You bring the supplies and we have the basic machine available for your use, just call ahead to make sure it's available!

Amanda: We have 9-piece tool kits and mobile [internet] hotspots available for check out.

How can residents stay connected to all your activities?

Morgan: We are working to keep our social media more up to date, so please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter! We've also got a newsletter in the works, so keep an eye out for that in the coming months.

Amanda: The most effective way is by following our Facebook page. The Chamber [of Commerce] also includes some of our activities in the weekly newsletter they put out.

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