

CITY OF  
**CHARLESTOWN**

EST. 1808

Dr. Treva Hodges, Ph. D.  
MAYOR

June 25, 2020

*City of Charlestown Common Council  
304 Main Cross Street  
Charlestown, IN 47111*

*Re: Updates – Founders Day Festival, Sanitation Department Concerns, and 2021 Budget Preparation*

*Dear Council Members:*

*I hope you all are well and making the most out of the summer despite the challenges given us by the COVID-19 situation. This letter provides some updates on items of interest to you.*

*After your request at the June council meeting to host a concert and fireworks festival in September, I took the proposal to the Board of Works. Considering the continued caution required for the COVID-19 situation and the cancellation of other local events since that meeting (Harvest Homecoming, Thunder over Louisville, Jeffersonville Riverstage and movies in the park, Sellersburg Celebrates, and Scottsburg's festival as examples), the Board has decided not to host a large event this year. It's very hard to have to cancel our major festivals but the City cannot safely assume the liability of a large concert event this year. In order to help foster the community connection that Founders Day usually offers, the Board agreed to smaller community events that carry some of the themes that Founders Day provides. The Board approved a one-mile race on July 25 and, beginning June 27, we will have a pop-up vendor market on the square every Saturday until August 1. It is our hope that these events will allow smaller groups of people to gather and fill the void this year with the anticipation of having our 20<sup>th</sup> Founders Day celebration next year on the fourth weekend in June. In partnership with the police department, we are also holding a Unity Night event in Greenway Park on Thursday, July 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm. I've asked Council Member JT Cox to lead the attendees in an invocation and some local residents will provide music for us. I hope you will all attend. All of you are invited to speak at the event as well, please just let me know your preference.*

*At the last council meeting the proposed revised sanitation ordinance was presented for its first reading. This revision is very much needed. In 2018 the Sanitation Department operated at a loss of ~~-\$24,215.25~~ and in 2019 the loss was ~~-\$61,100.04~~. In order to meet our expenses, we need to increase the rates minimally to the recommended \$20.52/month. Please note that this modest increase only covers our essential costs and does not factor in capital improvements or truck replacements in the future. In order to factor those elements and get the department on a plan that does not require it to assume debt each time a truck is purchased we have also included additional use fees. These fees will help build an equipment replacement fund for the future. One way the Council can help the department stand on its own in the future and avoid debt is to pass this ordinance with the new rate and fees and consider an additional appropriation that will pay off the existing truck debt and pay for a new truck. This will put the department in a strong, debt-free position moving forward and the new fees will help avoid additional debt in the future. The Sanitation staff does a fantastic job, but they are overloaded with work. Special work orders for bulky item pick up place a high strain on us from a staffing perspective and significantly increase our landfill costs. In the last 41 working days we have had 816 work orders placed for large item pick up outside of the regular garbage can collections. The new ordinance will be a significant help to them.*

*We are entering the period of budget preparation for next year. The good news is that we received 100% of our property tax distribution. Charlestown is unique in this and it reflects our strong housing growth. We did see some reductions in our MVH allotments and, looking ahead, will need to plan carefully for the decrease in LOIT we will receive in 2022 as a result of so many people being off work in March, April, and May of this year. Overall, our financial advisers recommend we remain conservative with spending but are pleased at our local outcome. I want to assure the Council that my staff and I are doing all we can to spend cautiously. I continue to watch staffing expenses in particular. Gross payroll in the first six months of 2019 totaled \$1,244,262.09 and, for comparison, this year we are at \$1,126,274.39 for a savings of \$117,987.70.*

*Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information about the items presented in this letter.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Treva E. Hodges". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Treva" being the most prominent part.

*Dr. Treva E. Hodges, Mayor  
City of Charlestown, Indiana*