

Mayor's Comments 7-120-09

1. **The Waukegan Municipal Band-** As many of you are aware last week I suspended the financial relationship the City of Waukegan had with the Municipal Band. This was not a decision I took lightly or made easily. It came out of conversations with the Director of Governmental Services and the Chair of Finance, Pat Needham as we reviewed our options for reducing the deficit in the budget. Our annual expenditures for the concerts have been \$60,000 for the salaries of the performers- a cost equal to one fulltime firefighter or police officer. The fact that we had Waukegan staff there and provided the equipment for the concerts is not included in that cost. While we only had several concerts left I felt it was important to initiate the cost cutting measure immediately in order to demonstrate good faith with our Waukegan safety personnel that we were addressing all possible cost cutting measures while we were asking pay reductions from their ranks or possibly using layoffs to help trim the deficit. The Band volunteered to play for free, something for which I am grateful and I am sure the patrons will keep in mind when they attend the final performances. I am hoping that during the off season the Band can begin a vigorous fund raising effort or seek corporate sponsorships for next year's season to ensure another season of enjoyment for residents and visitors alike.
2. **After the intense rains that hit the City several weeks ago I applied seeking the City's status as a disaster area through the Governor's office. I learned last week that that request was denied for a couple of reasons. First, we did not have to take extraordinary measures in use of personnel or call in outside assistance during the event. Second that damage to the homes in Waukegan, while upsetting and expensive to our residents, was limited to basements. For the disaster declaration to take effect damage would have to have been to first floor levels. The**

Federal Government is making some low interest funding available through the Small Business Administration for both business and private property owners. If you go to our web site the contact information and instructions can be accessed through a link we have posted.

- 3. I would like to announce that the motion picture projector has been installed at the Genesee Theater and we have scheduled the first date for the return of film to the theater. Our first choice is a true American classic and will be announced through the press in the next couple of days. I am hoping that this is the beginning of increased use of the theater in order to attract more people into our downtown and to begin to help the Theater to cover its costs more fully. We have been making annual interest payments on the Bond for the theater of approximately \$1.5 million dollars as well as \$350,000 a year in support payments to keep the institution open on a day to day basis. I believe that we must adopt a more business like attitude to this investment on the part of the people of Waukegan and push forward with a plan that calls for increased usage of this venue.**
- 4. Lastly, after the Council adopted the new late night liquor license at the last meeting, I felt that it was important that the citizens of our community have the chance to express their opinions on this issue. I am announcing that the first public sharing on this matter will be held next Wednesday at 6:00 in these chambers. I am extending an invitation to all residents, community organizations and business owners to attend and express your selves on this matter.**

I have a couple of things to talk about briefly before we begin to address city business.

The first is to announce that we have made substantial progress in reducing expenditures by measures other than laying off city workers, something that no one wanted to see. As will be more fully explained, we have entered into a tentative agreement with our firefighters that avoids such layoffs. And we have high hopes that negotiations with our police officers and our other city workers will lead to the same result. I can assure you that every effort is being made to preserve our city's solvency without adverse impact on the families of our employees and the safety of our community.

And this leads into the second thing I need to talk about. Reports have been coming into my office of illegal or unethical activity ~~on~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the part of certain city officials~~ ^{City Gov't} with respect to the operation of certain city departments. For example, we received a report about a slush fund at Public Works, investigated it, and found it to be true.

So we are in the process of looking into other reports concerning, among other things, the misuse of city materials, equipment, and resources. We have asked our employees to step forward with any information they may have about this or any other kind of illegal or unethical activity. And I am asking the same of our citizens.

If you have knowledge of any misconduct ^{in City Gov't} ~~by any city official~~, past or present, I ask you to contact our corporation counsel, Newton Finn, whom I have directed to look into these matters. All of us hope that these reports turn out to be untrue, and whatever the outcome, please remember that the vast majority of our city officials are honest and dedicated public servants. Mr. Finn can be reached directly at 847/599-0202, or feel free to call my office and we'll put you in touch with him. Your city will thank you.