

Mark Cross

...from the Mayor's Desk

Greetings – it's been a busy month since we last connected in this column. It's been a beautiful October with lots of opportunities to get out of the house, use the parks and attend events around town. I hope you have been able to enjoy this great weather.

I'm pleased to announce some positive economic news. In 2010, we issued 93 residential and commercial building permits for the city of Troy. This is up from 2009, when we issued 48 permits and 2008, when we issued 73 permits. Clearly this is a trend now headed in the right direction.

In addition, we expect a better quarter for sales tax revenue. As I mentioned last month, the city derives its revenue from property tax, personal property tax and sales tax. Our sales tax revenue was flat last month. While that may not be a cause for celebration, it is an improvement over the month before. So far this year, our sales tax revenue is down 4.4 percent. However, with the holiday season approaching and the opportunity for increased sales at retail outlets, we could end the year in a much better position. Again, the Board of Aldermen and I are watching carefully to keep our expenses in line with our income.

In other good news, Troy recently acquired a donated bucket truck. AmerenUE has a program in which they donate retired trucks to cities in their service area. I put in a request several months ago and the truck arrived a couple of weeks ago. This truck will enable us to trim trees, hang holiday decorations and maintain street lights and planters without having to rent or borrow a truck.

Last month, I mentioned that the construction at the



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intersection of Cherry Street and Lincoln would begin soon. The project officially started on October 25. The duration will be 105 days, weather permitting. Once finished, we'll have a wider road, dedicated turn lanes, new curbs and a traffic light at that busy intersection. The timing may be tricky toward the end of the project, as we get into more inclement weather. Let's all hope for a mild winter and a speedy completion.

In addition, we are out making street repairs. Right now we have a crew on Excalibur Drive in The Legends subdivision, off Highway J. We'll continue to make street repairs, weather permitting, as we head into winter.

Enjoy the beginning of the holiday season with Thanksgiving fast approaching. Whether you are traveling or staying in the area, be safe. I'll see you next month if not before.

Main Street Elementary makes books more accessible for kids

We ask parents to read to their children or for children to read to themselves each night for about 30 minutes," said Christi Shinn, principal of Main Street Elementary in Troy. "When we made that request, we took for granted that families would have reading materials at home or access to reading materials. We started to hear back that families didn't have the resources at home for reading time."

With that in mind, Main Street Elementary launched its Literary Back Pack program on November 1. Currently, there are 20 back packs filled with two weeks of reading materials for students. Back packs are filled with books geared for specific reading levels from kindergarten to 5th grade.

"On our first day, we had 10 families check out back packs," said Shinn.

Ideally, Shinn explained, the program would have about 200 back packs for families to check out. "We are still collecting books and back packs for the program," said Shinn. More books and back packs are needed. "If people in the community want to participate, we are accepting children's gently used books or back packs as well as financial contributions to purchase books for the Literary Back Pack program."

Next week, Main Street Elementary is holding its Scholastic Book Fair on November 9, 10 and 11. Scholastic Books has

offered to match in books whatever money the school can raise for the Literary Back Pack program. In other words, if the school raises \$200, Scholastic will provide \$400 worth of books to the program.

"Having a back pack full of reading choices is more convenient for the kids and parents. We want to make this as easy as possible to have access to reading materials at home. This is one-stop shopping," said Shinn.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students who reported having a variety of reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers) in their home scored, on average, higher than those who reported having fewer materials. Also, out-of-school reading habits of students have shown that even 15 minutes a day of independent reading, can expose students to more than a million words of text in a year.

