



Manager's Newsletter

January 21, 2022

From the City Manager's Desk

City Commission Meetings

The pandemic has changed the accessibility of public meetings and that is very evident with the Big Rapids' City Commission meetings.

The City Commission is now holding hybrid meetings where there is always the option of attending in person but anyone can attend via Zoom as well.

If you miss a meeting, they are recorded and can be accessed at a later time. The City's website, www.cityofbr.org, under the City Commission tab is where to look for these resources.

Please stay connected, it is easier than ever!!

At the City Commission

Due to City Hall being closed on Monday for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, on Tuesday, January 18, the City Commission held a hybrid meeting.

The Commission also acted on several points of business including:

- Awarding bids for the asbestos removal and demolition of the structure at 124 W Bellevue,
- Two resolutions related to accepting state and federal monies to support DART,
- A resolution amending the Annual Interest Rate for City Income Taxes,
- A resolution extending the listing agreement with Re/Max Together Realty for 906 N. State St,
- A resolution authorizing a City Attorney Hiring Committee,
- As well as several other items of business.

Commission meetings are always open to the public. You are welcome to join on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM on Zoom.

Meet and Greet: Jessie Black, Community Economic Development Specialist

Hi folks! My name is Jessie Black and I have been working full-time with the City of Big Rapids since October of 2021. I was born and raised in Milford, Connecticut until I moved to Michigan at 19-years-old to attend Central Michigan University (fire up chips!). I graduated from CMU with my Bachelor's of Social Work in 2018 and then completed my Master's of Social Work with a concentration in Public Policy at UConn (go huskies!) in May of 2020. I am a crazy dog lady and recently adopted my first puppy! In my free time I love to go for walks, do puzzles, watch Survivor, sing, dance, fangirl for the Detroit Red Wings, and spend time with friends.



By the Numbers: 01/03 - 01/16

Dial-a-Ride Service

- 3,272 Total Passengers
- 2,590 Demand Response Passengers
- 682 Ferris Shuttle Riders
- 516 Adult Riders and 739 Child Riders
- 1,335 Senior or Disabled Riders

Festival of the Arts 2022

After a hiatus in 2021, Festival of the Arts is back for 2022 with many workshops, entertainments, and exhibits for you to enjoy this February. All events are free of charge except in cases where workshop materials are required. Some workshops have limited capacity, so interested persons are encouraged to pre-register.

Want to learn more or see the schedule of events? Visit brfota.org, pick up a Festival Booklet at City Hall or the Library, or follow [brfota](#) on Facebook and Instagram.



Big Rapids Community Library

- The Library is open from 11AM-6PM Monday through Friday and 10AM-3PM on Saturday.
- The Winter Reading Challenge is ongoing until February 7th. Remember to log your reading on the Beanstack app or on your reading log to be entered in the Prize Drawing on Feb. 9th.
- Mornings with Mr. Howard are storytimes that take place every Thursday at 11:00AM via Facebook Live. Join Mr. Howard virtually for a story and a craft.
- Not sure what to read? Apply for the "Lit Loot" subscription box. Over three months, Library staff will select books for you according to your preferences.
- Go to bigrapidslibrary.org for to learn about the many new programs for all age groups or to access online materials.



Big Rapids Community Library

Meet and Greet continued.

Last year the City of Big Rapids was selected through the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Certification program to hire a full-time fellow that would help provide people-power to move the City towards full certification. And that's where my role as the Community Economic Development Specialist comes in. The RRC Certification is a certification process City staff has been working towards for years, and achieving this milestone will open opportunities for financial resources and overall people power to continue growing and developing the community. I am humbled to be a part of this work that will help the community thrive at its fullest potential.



There are many things I have discovered I love right here in Big Rapids! The Riverwalk is my favorite place to decompress and enjoy Mother Nature while The Backroom Coffee is my favorite joint to grab a honey cinnamon oat milk latte with my colleagues. I love how quickly and seamlessly City staff has welcomed me into the work environment with lots of laughs, smiles, and opportunities to learn.

Hemlock Park Ice Rink

The Hemlock Park Ice Rink is currently open and will remain open while the weather permits. Rink use is allowed during park hours from 8AM to 10PM, with lights on from dusk until 10PM. Please follow posted rink rules and enjoy this fun winter outdoor activity!



Manager's Newsletter

February 25, 2022

From the City Manager's Desk

City Budget

The City's fiscal year is from July 1st to June 30th. City staff is currently working on the budget for the upcoming 2022/23 fiscal year.

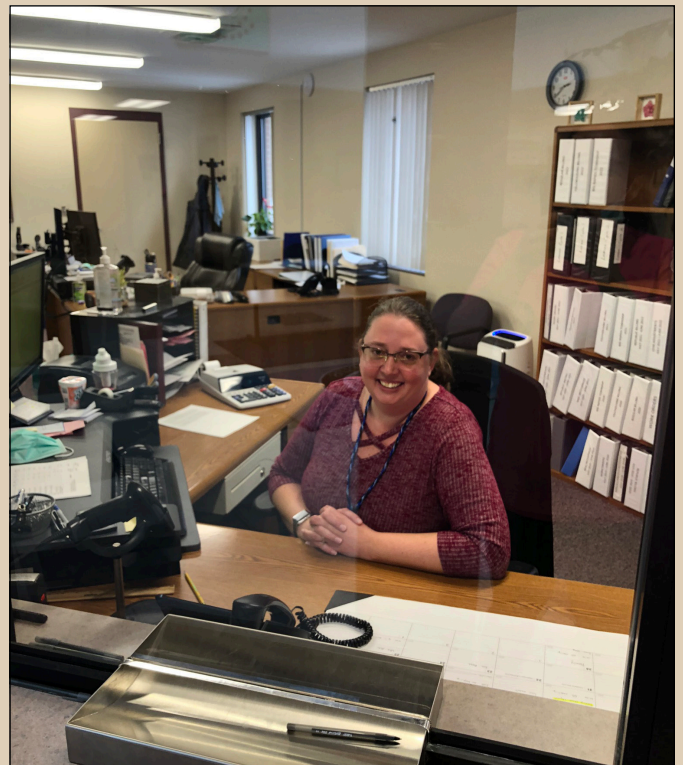
There are opportunities for community members to involve themselves in the process, including two scheduled public input sessions dedicated to the budget at the April 4th and May 9th City Commission meetings. Please consider taking the time to give us your input on the budget.

If you can't attend one of the meetings call or email anytime at 231-592-4058 or mgifford@cityofbr.org.

Meet and Greet:

Andrea Kuiawa, Finance Utility Clerk in the Treasurer's Office

Hello! My name is Andrea Kuiawa and I started working for the City of Big Rapids in July 2021. I work as the Finance Utility Clerk in the Treasurer's Office. I process the monthly water, sewer and sanitation utility bills for the city and get them mailed out to residents and business owners. I handle any questions or concerns that residents and business owners have about their water bill, sanitation concerns, or other treasury related items. I also process the payments for utility bills, property taxes, income taxes and any other payments that come in. I think one of the best parts of this job is getting to meet all the different people that come into City Hall.



At the City Commission

On Monday, January 21, the City Commission held a hybrid meeting which began with a Study Session about the 2021 Annual Report of Planning. The Commission also acted on several points of business including:

- a resolution to approve a Liquor License for Katke Golf Course and a Resolution making several Mayoral Appointments to boards and commissions,
- an Ordinance authorizing the leasing of City land to provide and develop facilities for outdoor recreation and an Ordinance to permit and regulate "shared mobility devices" (scooters),
- and a Resolution accepting a proposal from F&V Construction for Phase 1 of the Hemlock Park Improvement project,
- as well as other items of business.

Commission meetings are always open to the public. You are welcome to join on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM in person or on Zoom.

Mini-Grants Now Available!

The City of Big Rapids offers the Housing Rehabilitation Mini-Grant Program to help local homeowners on a limited budget make needed repairs and updates to the exterior of their homes. The program provides small reimbursement grants of \$500.00 or less to low-income homeowners who reside within the Big Rapids city limits.

Examples of qualified repairs include siding repair, exterior painting, sidewalk repair or replacement, and roof, porch, or window repair. Mini-grants are available on a first-come, first-served basis for owner-occupied properties only. Rental units will not be considered.

Visit www.cityofbr.org to download an application or contact Suzanne Wiggins in the Community Development Department by phone at (231) 592-4032 or via email at swiggins@cityofbr.org.



Meet and Greet continued

My family moved to Newaygo, MI when I was in the fourth grade. I graduated from Newaygo High School in 2001 and then went to Ferris State University. I moved to Big Rapids while I was attending Ferris and have been here ever since. I graduated from Ferris with a degree in Accounting in 2006 and I have worked in a few different accounting positions for the past 16 years all in this general area.



Andrea with her family at Disney.

I love the family atmosphere here in Big Rapids. There are always events in town to attend with my husband and daughter; and there are so many different parks and trails to explore! My daughter and I love to go to the library and discover all the new items they have. When I am not working, I like to read books, watch movies and spend time with my family.

Big Rapids Community Library

- The Library is open between 11AM-6PM Monday through Friday and 10AM-3PM on Saturday.
- Adult Murder Mystery Kits are available on the third Monday of the month while supplies last. The February 2022 Kits are available now.
- Lit Loot! Have a library staff member pick out your next great read with this three-month subscription to the genre of your choice.
- Your library card gives you access to much more than the materials at the BRCL. Check into the many digital resources available, including the Libby app for eBooks and audiobooks and Kanopy for streaming videos.
- Go to bigrapidslibrary.org for event details or to access online materials.



By the Numbers: 1/16/22-2/18/22

Dial-a-Ride Service

- 9,666 Total Passengers
- 6,115 Demand Response Passengers
- 3,551 Ferris Shuttle Riders
- 1,230 Adult Riders and 1,513 Child Riders
- 3,372 Senior or Disabled Riders



Manager's Newsletter

March 25, 2022

From the City Manager's Desk

Festival of the Arts 2023

The Festival of the Arts recently ended for 2022 and it was wonderful to see the community response. A big thank you to all Festival donors and attendees.

The FOTA Board is already working on the 2023 Festival, and we would love to have your input. If you have ideas for potential Festival event please call or email 231-592-4058 or mgifford@cityofbr.org.



At the City Commission

On Monday, March 21, the City Commission held a hybrid meeting which began with two Study Sessions including an update about the Census' financial impacts and an update about funding for the Roben-Hood Airport Runway Extension project. The Commission also acted on several points of business including:

- A resolution accepting bids for the Rust Avenue Extension Project,
- Adopting the 2022-2028 Capital Improvements Program,
- Rezoning 510 S Third Ave from R-3 to C-3, and
- Two amendments to City Ordinances regarding regulations for marihuana businesses,
- as well as other items of business.

Commission meetings are always open to the public. You are welcome to join on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM in person or on Zoom.

Meet and Greet:

Kasey Metcalf, Police Officer

My name is Kasey Metcalf, and I am a Police Officer with the City of Big Rapids. I started with the city in November of 2017 after graduating from Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). Prior to graduating I attended Coopersville High School and was very involved in sports including baseball, basketball, and soccer. After high school I first attended Ferris State University, where I completed most of my general education credits, and worked as a Service Officer at the police department then later transferred to GRCC to complete the police academy.

In August of 2019 I left and accepted a Police Officer Position with the Pokagon Band Tribal Police until December of 2019 where I returned to the City of Big Rapids. I am currently assigned to patrol



Officer Metcalf with his patrol vehicle downtown Big Rapids.

Dial-a-Ride Service: 02/19 - 03/20

- 7,407 Total Passengers
- 5,363 Demand Response Passengers
- 2,860 Ferris Shuttle Riders
- 994 Adult Riders and 1,509 Child Riders
- 2,860 Senior or Disabled Riders

Interested City Residents

The City of Big Rapids is looking for community minded City residents who are interested in serving on any of the various City Boards or Commissions. If you have an accounting background, you may be interested in the ACT 345 or the Assessment Board of Appeals. If you ride the City's Dial-A-Ride transportation, you may be interested in the Dial-A-Ride Board. Have a trade job, your skills would be invaluable on the Property Maintenance Appeals Board. All board information can be found at www.cityofbr.org, document center, forms and permits, Interest Indicator or from the City Clerk's office in City Hall, 226 N. Michigan Avenue, during the working hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Big Rapids Community Library

- The Library is open between 11AM-6PM Monday through Friday and 10AM-3PM on Saturday.
- April is National Poetry Month! Stop by the Library in April to participate in the poetry themed activities such as "Poems in the Park" and "Poetry in the Stacks".
- Leap into Science is hosting an event for kids age 5-10 on Monday, April 11 from 4-5PM. This is a fun, STEM friendly activity all about Balance.
- Interested in fungi? Attend the "Pickin' with the Champ" event on April 27 at 6PM to learn about morel hunting from expert morel hunter Anthony Williams.
- Mornings with Mr. Howard takes place on Facebook Live every Thursday at 11AM.
- Go to bigrapidslibrary.org for event details or to access online materials.



Big Rapids Community Library

Meet and Greet continued.

division on night shift and enjoy the excitement and unpredictability of working at night. Since joining the department I've taken an active role in recruiting efforts to hire new officers. Last September I attended a weeklong Honor Guard Training in Alpena and I'm a member of our joint Honor Guard Team with the Sheriff's Office and Ferris State.

Currently I'm collecting information and creating a cost analysis for the creation of a police K-9 program which includes cost of training, equipment, policy and procedure, and any recurring cost to present to city leaders in hopes to establish a K-9 unit for the department and City of Big Rapids. At the end of 2020 my lovely wife, Danielle, and I purchased our first home together and got married in August of 2021. Our "fixer- upper" keeps me pretty busy on off days but outside of work I also like to take the boat out and go fishing, duck hunt when in season, golf with friends, and watch the Red Wings games.



Officer Metcalf and his wife, Danielle.

I enjoy that Big Rapids has that small-town close-knit family atmosphere that I grew up in yet has all the amenities of a bigger city a person could ask for. Big Rapids has become my home away from home and I look forward to seeing this community develop and grow.



Manager's Newsletter

April 22, 2022

From the City Manager's Desk

Pure Michigan Trail Town!

The DNR has awarded Big Rapids the designation of an official Pure Michigan Trail Town. This is a wonderful step forward for our community and positions the City to capitalize on all trail improvements that are happening in Mecosta County. If you have questions or further interest in this accomplishment please call or email 231-592-4058 or mgifford@cityofbr.org.



At the City Commission

On Monday, April 18, the City Commission held a hybrid meeting which began with several Special Orders, including a Life Saving Award to two Firefighters, the Parks and Recreation Citizen Recognition Award, and the Arbor Day Proclamation, as well as two Study Sessions about the Library and Police Officer Recruitment.

The Commission also acted on several points of business including:

- A charitable gaming license,
- Awarding several Public Works project bids,
- and Authorizing a City Treasurer Hiring Committee, as well as other items of business.

Two work session discussions were held on the topics of Marijuana Funds and the Draft Development Agreement for the Mechanic Street Residential Housing Development.

Commission meetings are always open to the public. You are welcome to join on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 6:30 PM in person or on Zoom.

Meet and Greet: Karen Simmon, City Commissioner

Hello Friends!

I'm a native of Mecosta, but when I bought my first house in 2009, I knew I would be a Big Rapids resident for life. My education brought me here, my career kept me here and my love for our community makes me stay here.

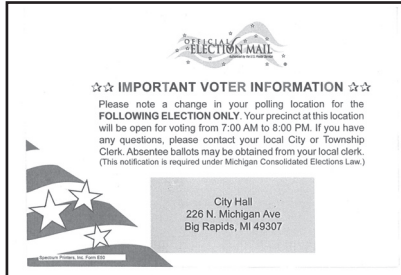
While I work at Ferris State University as a project manager, I'm currently one of your City Commissioners. Before that, I was very involved in the City's Parks and Recreation Board and the Planning Commission. I realized that I enjoyed being a public servant and take pride in representing the citizens of Big Rapids. My goal is to expand our sense of community through volunteer work and local grassroots efforts.



May 3, 2022 Election Information

Notice from the City Clerk:

Election ID cards for the May 3, 2022 election were inadvertently sent out with no election date on them. All three precincts for the Special Big Rapids School Election will be combined and City residents will vote at City Hall on May 3, 2022. Sorry for the confusion.



Battery Recycling

If you have used batteries, you can bring them to City Hall to be properly recycled. Please see the Big Green Box in lobby and follow the instructions posted.



Big Rapids Community Library

- The Library is open from 11AM-6PM Monday through Friday and 10AM-3PM on Saturday.
- Pickin' With the Champ, a morel hunting seminar with five-time National Morel Hunting Champion Anthony Williams, will take place at the Library on April 27th at 6PM.
- Mornings with Mr. Howard are storytimes that take place every Thursday at 11:00AM via Facebook Live. Join Mr. Howard virtually for a story and a craft.
- Wits Workouts, a program for those 50+, are taking place every Tuesday from 3-4PM through July 5, in partnership with the MSU Extension
- Go to bigrapidslibrary.org for to learn about the many new programs for all age groups or to access online materials.



Meet and Greet continued.

My current passion projects are the Hemlock Park Improvement project and the Mechanic Street housing development. The Hemlock Park project has been years in the making and I'm proud of our community's fundraising efforts. I'm incredibly excited to have a new playscape that's ADA accessible and promotes play for kids of all abilities.

The Mechanic Street development will bring more affordable housing opportunities to our City. Big Rapids needs more housing to continue to grow and thrive - this project will provide almost 100 lots for future development. Getting the infrastructure in place will be critical to the project's success.

I am very active in the Ferris Women's Network. This group started as a grassroots effort to create a community dedicated to lifelong education, personal growth and authentic, courageous living. As president of Ferris Women's Network, I chair our e-board, providing support, leadership and direction. I am also involved with the Big Rapids Social Equity Initiative, a group that plays a critical part in having purposeful discussions about how race impacts our community.



Karen with other members of the Ferris Women's Network.

Being able to connect with our community and our government is one of the things I love the most about Big Rapids. I live with my dad and my dog Lilly - you might have seen them walking together in our neighborhood. Dad always has the scoop on what's going on around town and lets me know when something needs the City's attention. Being this connected to a community brings me joy.