



# Vermilion PHOTOJOURNAL

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## Honoring our veterans

Veterans from each of the local organizations in Vermilion – AMVETS Post 22, American Legion Post 397, and VFW Post 7576 and their auxiliaries held Veterans Day services honoring our men and women who serve, both past and present, in Exchange Park on Nov. 11. AMVETS Past Commander Malcolm Williams (right) urged younger veterans and the community to volunteer for services, and to join the various organizations, as the veteran population is aging. Keynote speaker was Mayor Jim Forthofer (center) who spoke of the commitment and sacrifices made by those who serve us. Also pictured is Russ Mayer of the American Legion 397. The wreath was placed on the monument by Judi Lane.

## Council, mayor, staff debate raises for administrative positions

By CANDACE BARCZYK

Vermilion City Council, on the heels of giving its clerk a raise, is being asked by the administration to give clerks in the building, utilities and finance departments a raise, as well as the police chief's administrative assistant. But some raises, some as much as 30 percent, appear to be a little steep. Forthofer said in light of the current job market, the raises are needed to retain staff and show appreciation for service to the city, and job classifications are lower than neighboring cities. Council voted 4-2 to move forward with the legislation, which will likely have more heated discussion in front of it.

Forthofer said over the past years due to the city's former financial woes, it has not kept up with salaries in key positions. "This has left us behind." Compound that, he said, right now it is an employee's job market,

and if the city loses people, it will have a difficult time replacing them at the current salary levels it has. He distributed pay structures for neighboring communities that addressed the building, utilities, and finance departments. In the Building and Utilities Department, to be comparable, Forthofer presented a \$2.50/hr raise. In the Finance Department, a \$5/hour raise is proposed. The total cost to the city would be \$56,000 annually, and recommended legislation be prepared.

Council President Steve Herron, said, "Believe me, you're 100 percent correct... the City of Vermilion is in the same situation as any other hiring agency. It has to make decisions based on the market... we have an obligation to keep these salaries competitive." Herron felt it was best to bring it up to the next council, of which he will be a part. He said the reason for this is a couple of years ago, this was done, the next

council came in, and votes changed, and it was erased.

Holovac said he and two others would be gone, so he agreed, but one thing he'd like to see done is the total compensation package. "You just can't compare wages." He said vacation, hospitalization, longevity, "When you put that all together, what is the cost per employee?"

Council-at-Large Monica Stark said she was glad the administration brought this back, as council asked to have some of the salaries revised a bit. "I agree – we need to pay our employees what they're worth because we want to keep our employees." Councilwoman Barb Brady said she was confused as these positions have a "me, too" agreement as what Local 860 gets in raises, these positions get as raises. "I can't agree that we do large increases and the me,

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## Council supports roadwork phase of Main Street plan

By CANDACE BARCZYK

It looks like the Main Street Beach Revitalization Project is motoring forward, as council is having legislation prepared to fund its portion of the project – the proposed roadwork funding, totaling \$492,000. This phase of the project would complete paving of Main Street, from Huron Street to the beach, and improve accessibility with handicap parking. In attendance at Monday's Streets Buildings & Grounds Committee were Stella Dilik, chief development officer, and Andy McDowell, vice president, Western Field Operations, both of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC), who explained the next phases of the \$1.87 million project.

Mayor Jim Forthofer said last December, the Parks Board and WRLC came to council and painted a picture of what the project was going to look like. He said at that time, he requested \$66,000 for the sewer line to the future site of the new comfort station. He said the museum was taken down, and WRLC is in the final stages of closing on the Linda and Bill Stuchal property, the last home on the right, which will make way for the comfort station.

McDowell went over the project, starting in 2007. He said the Wakefield MetroPark was completed in 2011, followed by the Inland Seas Maritime Museum acquisition in 2013, then the Vermilion Beach extension in 2018. He said the WRLC is slated to close on the Stuchal property in the next two weeks. The house will be demolished in the middle of December, then the bathroom project, followed by the parking lot.

McDowell said he was in front of council in December 2020 with a conceptual plan, which has changed since then, "But the tone and feel of it is similar. A conceptual plan is just that... that has developed into a better master plan, which is well more refined, and has much more community input." He said the original master plan included a pavilion, "But the feel we got from everyone in town that once it (museum) was down, the view was too great. Let's keep it as is for now."

Following the Stuchal property acquisition, McDowell said the comfort station will next be on tap. He said the goal is "to be up and running by Memorial Day of next year, 2022." He said before that is done, the sani-

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