

The

# Clarkston News

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# Residents call for review of city leadership

**Dear Editor,**

We are a group of concerned City of the Village of Clarkston taxpayers who want to bring a pressing issue to your attention that you may not be aware of.

The City of the Village of Clarkston owns several pieces of equipment that are used for clearing snow from the streets, cutting trees, etc. After 15 years, the city's lease to store city equipment at 3 East Church Street expired at the end of December, and the city moved its equipment and records out of that location. Our lease payment was \$1,625 per month, but in addition to that, we were also paying for all of the utilities and maintenance at that location. Because the City Council was aware that the lease was going to expire, they considered a number of options for storing this equipment.

For now, the City Council has chosen to lease space for some of the equipment from the Clarkston schools for \$240 a month, which is significantly less than we were paying for the space at 3 East Church.

The space is located behind the Clarkston Junior High School at 6595 Waldon Road. This is just one mile away from the City Hall, so it is easy for our DPW workers to retrieve equipment when it is needed. Both the school district and Independence Township have advised the city that there may be additional space to lease to the city in the future if we need it and both have secure outdoor storage areas available, something the city does not have now.

Problem solved, and this sounds like a win-win solution. The taxpayers pay less, the equipment is protected from harm, it's stored in a place that is close to the city offices, and the school can use the extra money for school purposes. It's the kind of choice that we would make if we had to personally write the check to pay for storage, isn't it?

Unfortunately, our City Council has control of the checkbook for our tax dollars. Even though we have a place to store the city equipment that costs us a lot less than we were paying, the City Council wants to use the perceived need to find a place to put the city equipment as an excuse to expand City Hall.

Why would they do that? Well, the city manager wants a private office, they want to increase the size of the room where they meet for a few hours every other week, and the city manager says that our three DPW employees think driving one mile to pick up their equipment is an inconvenience.

Incredibly, the original plans called for private offices for each and every one of the city's parttime employees. Though the city doesn't readily share information, it appears that the current plans would enlarge the office space with no modifications for private office spaces — yet. The city manager has stated many times that she believes she is entitled to a private office, and we believe that once the city has put the taxpayers on

*Please see City on page 8*



# City has more options beside expansion, readers say

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the hook for the \$442,000 expansion, the private office(s) will be built because the incremental increased cost won't be as significant.

It must be noted that city employees, including those in the DPW, regularly drive to locations outside the city on city business. Necessary stores and services do not exist within the borders of the City of the Village of Clarkston and, when you live in a city that is only 1/2 square mile in area, driving to another community for goods and services is not the exception, it is the norm.

The cost for this expansion is estimated at around \$442,000, including interest on the loan that the city would take out. This would amount to a charge of over \$500 each for every man, woman, and child living in homes that are subject to property tax in the city and does not include the ongoing costs for utilities and maintenance that are part of any building.

In addition, we would be stuck paying back the loan for this expansion for 15 years! Paying back this loan will also make fewer funds available for other services. Our City Treasurer has said that paying this bill will require almost all available discretionary funds, and she's counting on increased property taxes (yes, higher taxes) to pay this

bill.

We are a small city of just over 800 people — can we really justify paying a fortune for a private office for anyone? And, if space for public meetings is really a concern, the City Council, or any other group, can meet at the Independence Township board room, the Independence Library, or at the Fire Station for free. As for the DPW employees, they need to go wherever the tools for their jobs are stored, whether they like it or not, just as we have to do when our bosses give us equipment to do our jobs.

One has to ask why the City Council even considered this when so many people are struggling to make ends meet, since we have a place to house our DPW equipment right now. Private offices, complaining employees, and larger meeting rooms are simply not justifiable expenses at the expense of all the other services, benefits and improvements that could be made in our city.

You may not be aware of any of this. It's understandable. The City is a wonderful community, we all have busy lives, and there are lots of things to do around town. Sadly, the City Council seems to have forgotten that these are real dollars, coming out of real pockets - dollars that we might prefer to keep and use for our own families. Unfortunately, when the City Council doesn't hear from you,

they assume you agree.

Time is running out. The City Council is moving forward with plans and bids to expand the building. There is still time to stop them, but to do that, you need to make your voice heard. If you think that it's not OK to spend \$442,000 of your money to pay for private offices, a larger meeting room, and a more expensive place to keep our equipment than we have now, then you need to let your City Council know now.

City Council members don't have offices at the city, so the fastest way to contact them is through email — check [www.villageofclarkston.org](http://www.villageofclarkston.org).

You can also send your City Council members a letter addressed to them at the City of the Village of Clarkston, 375 Depot Street, Clarkston, Michigan 48346. The phone number is 248-625-1559, but you will have to leave a message with a City employee if you call because the City Council members aren't usually in the office unless there is a City Council meeting. City Council meetings are on the second and fourth Monday of the month at 7 p.m. at the City Hall at 375 Depot Street and are open to the public.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. We wish you a healthy and happy New Year.

*Your Clarkston Neighbors*