

CITY OF JACKSON

OFFICIAL CITY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020

NOV. ELECTION GUIDE WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT IN JACKSON

The City of Jackson is providing key details of what you need to know about voting in the Tuesday, Nov. 3 General Election.

What's on the ballot

Elections for President, U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives are on the ballot, along with state and county races.

There are no City offices up for election in 2020.

However, voters in the City of Jackson will see two ballot proposals that ask voters to consider changes to the City Charter.

Ballot Proposal: Filling City Council and Treasurer Vacancies

The proposed amendment to City Charter Section 7.10 concerns how City Council and Treasurer vacancies are filled.

Currently, the Charter states that City Council and Treasurer vacancies are to be filled by the City Council, who appoints a resident to the position for the rest of the vacated term.

This Charter amendment proposes changing the Charter so vacancies

are filled by a vote of residents at the next general election following the opportunity for a primary election.

The City Council would still appoint someone to fill the vacancy until an election can be held.

Ballot Proposal: Changes to Nominating Petitions

The proposed amendment to City Charter Section 5.2 concerns nominating petitions for elected office.

Candidates for elected office must submit nominating petitions to qualify for the election.

These nominating petitions are circulated to collect resident signatures so the candidate has enough signatures to appear on the ballot.

Currently, those who are circulating the petitions must include a notarized affidavit stating they circulated the petitions and collected the signatures.

This Charter amendment would allow a non-notarized certificate of the circulator to be submitted with the nominating petitions instead



of a notarized affidavit.

A certificate of the circulator is a document the circulator signs saying they collected the signatures.

If approved, the proposed amendment will make this section of the Charter consistent with state law, which does not have a notary requirement, and help simplify the petition submission process.

Voting Absentee

The City of Jackson has seen a large increase in residents voting by absentee ballot during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INSIDE

- 2 Election coverage
- 3 City Manager appointment
- 3 New website for property sales
- 5 Help available for unpaid water bills
- 5 Fall leaf collection
- 6 Jackson park gets national honor
- 6 New housing for seniors opens

CONTINUES ON PAGE 2

CONTINUED: VOTING IN NOV. ELECTION

Voters who applied for an absentee ballot in the August Primary Election and indicated they'd like to receive an absentee ballot for the Nov. General Election on their application will automatically receive their Nov. ballots in the mail.

Those wanting to request an absentee ballot, who have not already applied, may apply on the Secretary of State's website at Michigan.gov/vote, by mail, by email, or in person.

Absentee ballots will be available 40 days before the election.

If you'd like to check on the status of your absentee ballot, such as if one is coming to your home or has been received by the City Clerk's Office, visit the Secretary of State's website.

It's important for absentee voters living in the same household to pay close attention to ensure the ballot assigned to them is returned in the appropriate envelope.

Contact the City Clerk's Office if a mistake is made to get instructions on how to correct it.

Voters may return ballots directly to the City Clerk's office during business hours or in the 24 hour drop box outside Jackson City Hall.

Those opting to return ballots by mail are encouraged to do so as early as possible.

Absentee ballots must be submitted by 8 p.m. on Election Day to be counted in the election.

Safe Voting at Jackson



COVID-19 safety guidelines will be followed at all Jackson polling places for the Nov. election.

Polling Places

All Jackson polling places will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

COVID-19 safety guidelines, which includes wearing face coverings and social distancing, will be used at all polling places to protect the health of poll workers and voters.

Those concerned about

voting in person may request an absentee ballot.

Online Information

Learn more about voting in this election by visiting cityofjackson.org/elections.

This election section of the City website has a full list of polling places and other important election information.

STREET CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS CONTINUE

Two large street construction projects will be completed this fall.

Construction work continues on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive between Mason Street and Morrell Street.

Once a new roundabout is constructed at MLK and Morrell, the intersection will reopen to traffic.

MLK Drive will remain closed to traffic through the rest of the construction work as crews complete the installation of a new water main, water service

lines, sidewalks, curbs, and pavement.

The Franklin Street improvement project is also making progress.

Franklin Street from Brown Street to West Avenue is getting a new water main, water service lines, curbs, sidewalks and pavement.

Street resurfacing projects on Higby, Durand and Thompson streets between Carlton Boulevard and W. Michigan Avenue are planned for this fall.



A new roundabout is under construction at the intersection of MLK Drive and Morrell Street.



MAYOR

Derek Dobies

COUNCIL

| | Ward |
|----------------------|------|
| Arlene Robinson | 1 |
| Freddie Dancy | 2 |
| Jeromy Alexander | 3 |
| Laura Dwyer Schlecte | 4 |
| Karen Bunnell | 5 |
| Will Forgrave | 6 |

CITY MANAGER

Jonathan Greene

MEETINGS & IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 13 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Oct. 27 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 3
Nov. General Election

Nov. 10 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Wednesday, Nov. 11
City Hall closed for Veterans Day

Nov. 24 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Thursday to Friday Nov. 26-27
City Hall closed for Thanksgiving

Dec. 8 • 6:30 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Monday, Dec. 21
First Day of Winter

CITY MANAGER APPOINTED

Jackson has a new City Manager! Jonathan Greene was appointed to the City Manager position by the Jackson City Council at their Aug. 11 meeting.

Greene had been serving as the Interim City Manager since the Feb. departure of former City Manager Patrick Burtch.

While he is new to the position, Greene has been a familiar face in Jackson for the last 11 years.

Greene previously worked as Jackson's Assistant City Manager, Public Works Director, Economic Development Director and Downtown Development Authority Director.

The new City Manager says he's very grateful for this opportunity.

"There are many challenges facing Jackson. I think my collaborative



City Manager Jonathan Greene

approach and community relationships can help us overcome anything we face," Greene said.

"I look forward to what is next and will work diligently with City staff to make a difference in our community and serve residents."

Greene resides in the City's Fourth Ward with his wife and children.

NEW PROPERTY WEBSITE

The City of Jackson has launched a new section of its website that guides residents through the process of buying City-owned vacant lots and houses.

By visiting cityofjackson.org/citypropertysales, residents can see which properties are for sale, review the eligibility process, and learn how to go about purchasing City-owned property.

Due to tax foreclosures and demolitions, the City now owns 532 vacant lots and 70 unoccupied houses.

With residents and business owners increasingly contacting the City for information on how to purchase these properties, City staff



worked to streamline the process and put the necessary information online.

City property sales are administered by the City Manager's Office with final approval coming from the Jackson City Council.





From the Desk of the Mayor

Derek Dobies

As our community safely reopens and adjusts to a new normal, the City of Jackson is ready to help.

When I declared a Local State of Emergency in March, it activated emergency procedures and allowed our City government to be more flexible in our response.

Six months into the COVID-19 crisis, City leadership continues to change the way we do business to lessen financial strains brought on by the pandemic.

Outdoor seating is now a common sight in Downtown Jackson as bars and restaurants have moved outdoors to meet safety requirements.

Our City government worked with these businesses to secure street and sidewalk space, along with waiving permit fees.

This quick action helped residents return to work and enabled businesses to contribute to our local economy again.

In recent months, the City's Neighborhood and Economic Operations Department has helped residents and landlords by extending property registration deadlines and reducing fees for blight violations and inspections.

The Jackson City Council is also stepping up by passing a resolution that allows the City Manager to waive select fees during the ongoing State of Emergency to help local businesses and residents.

City staff continue to collaborate with local partners on COVID-19 relief efforts and administer federal funds to help avert foreclosures, prevent evictions, and ensure water is delivered to vulnerable residents.

The hard work of battling this crisis is not over, but seeing the way our community is uniting, I know we can get through hard times by working together.

Sincerely,
Derek Dobies



You don't have to live on waterfront property to have direct access to Michigan's rivers and lakes.

The water that runs off your property into the street storm drain flows straight into the local water system.

That's why it's important to understand that whatever goes down your storm drain can negatively impact aquatic wildlife and water quality.

The City of Jackson's Water Department has tips for how you can be storm drain savvy and protect the environment.

- **Use a poop scooper.** Bacteria, parasites and viruses from pet waste can easily wash into storm drains and end up in waterways.
- **Limit pesticide and fertilizer use.** Pesticides are one of the biggest pollutants found in waterways. Limit fertilizer use to keep bacteria out of water.
- **Check vehicles for leaks.** When it rains, grease and oil drippings go into storm drains.
- **Wash vehicles on lawn or go to car wash.** Dirt and oil washed off vehicles can harm fish and animals if they go into the storm drain. Grass filters pollutants and water from car washes goes to the treatment plant.
- **Collect grass clippings.** Keep grass clippings off driveways, streets and sidewalks so they don't go in drains. Grass clippings in waterways can cause algae problems.
- **Reduce winter salt use.** The salt goes into waterways and causes higher salt levels in fresh water.
- **Only rain down the drain!** Remember the only substance that should be going down storm drains is rain water.

SPOTLIGHT ON PUBLIC WORKS

HELP AVAILABLE FOR PAYING WATER BILLS

If you're experiencing tough financial times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and struggling to pay water bills, you should know that help is available.

The Utility Billing Division of the Department of Public Works is collaborating with the Community Action Agency to use federal COVID-19 relief funds for water shutoff protection.

When the pandemic started in March, City officials halted water shutoffs to aid public health and hand washing.

While the City does not have plans to resume shutoffs anytime soon,

charges for water usage are still accumulating.

"We know our water customers may be struggling financially right now and we're here to help," said Utility Billing Supervisor Barb Matthes.

If you have unpaid water bills, Matthes says the first step is contacting the Utility Billing Division by calling 517-788-4082 or emailing waterbilling@cityofjackson.org.

"We will provide information and point you in the right direction to apply for available funds so you can avoid a large balance due or possible service



disruption at a later date," Matthes said.

A total of \$756,000 is coming to Jackson from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

So far, \$305,000 of those funds have been allocated by the Jackson City Council to help residents with water shutoff protection, foreclosure prevention and eviction protection.

LEAF COLLECTION



Loose leaf collection is returning this fall.

Last year, the City switched from bagged leaf pickup to loose leaf collection after purchasing new leaf vacuum equipment.

Additional leaf vacuum equipment has been acquired and tested to provide a more efficient collection this year.

Collection information will be mailed to residents and available on cityofjackson.org later this fall.

NEW DPW BUILDING



Department of Public Works (DPW) crews have a new place to launch from when they go out to maintain Jackson's streets and infrastructure.

A new building for DPW offices and equipment was completed in Sept. on Water Street, replacing an outdated building.

The modern facility will help DPW crews serve the community by providing more functional working spaces and proper storage for equipment.

BUCKY HARRIS PARK HONORED FOR HISTORY

A park in Downtown Jackson is getting national recognition for its anti-slavery history.

Bucky Harris Park was recently recognized by the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

It's a program that highlights sites important to Underground Railroad history across the country.

Research from Jackson resident Linda Hass shows Michigan's first anti-slavery newspaper, along with three other anti-slavery newspapers, were founded where the park stands today.

Further research from Hass shows the newspaper's founders were all involved in Underground Railroad activity in Jackson.

A new State of Michigan Historical Marker is planned for the park to recognize its unique history.



Bucky Harris Park was recently recognized by the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

NEW SENIOR APARTMENTS OPEN IN DOWNTOWN JACKSON



The newly constructed Francis Senior Lofts on S. MLK Drive.

Residents of all ages can now enjoy living in Downtown Jackson.

The Francis Senior Lofts, an apartment development for senior citizens over 55 years old with low-to-moderate income, is now leasing.

The newly constructed 45-unit building is located on S. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive near St. Mary's Catholic Church and features a mix of one and two bedroom units.

It was developed by MVAH Partners, a development company that's built affordable housing across the country.

The company identified a need for affordable independent living for seniors in Jackson and worked with the City of Jackson to find the perfect location.

"Downtown is the core of the community where services and amenities are at their highest. Services like restaurants, banks, bus lines and the YMCA are all within walking

distance," said Pete Schwiegeraht of MVAH Partners.

The \$9.5 million investment, which received no financial support from the City, secured state tax credits to offer these new units to seniors with limited income.

"We are required to keep units at an affordable level. The benefit is we can deliver these high quality housing units below market rate rent," Schwiegeraht said.

The building and its units are specially designed to be accessible and comfortable for senior residents.

"Our goal is to allow seniors to age in place in their own community. We will provide a host of services and programming for residents to keep them independent and on their own as long as possible," Schwiegeraht said.

Two other apartment developments in Downtown Jackson, the Albert Kahn Apartments and The 200, are still under construction.