

*Happy New
Year*



**The City of
Murphysboro
will be closed on**

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 16th

and

President's Day

February 20th

Happy new year to you and your family. I hope that you are blessed with New Year's good health, wealth and happiness in 2017. Speaking of 2017; the most critical item the City Council has been working on recently is adoption of the 2017 budget. The budget is crafted by city staff, the council and myself during the months of November and December. The total budget for 2017 is approximately 4.9 million dollars. The largest portion of our budget is spent in Police, Fire, and City Administration. These three departments make up about 60% of the total budget. Remaining expenditures go toward the City Clerk, Budget Officer, Human Resources, Street Department, Buildings and Grounds, Community Events, Code Enforcement, Healthcare, Information Technology, and the annual audit.

This year the Healthcare portion of the budget presented some challenges. Due to an unexpected 55% increase in our health insurance premiums, the city budget as first proposed was facing a \$448,000 deficit. This was cause for great concern. Therefore, in order to balance the budget some difficult decisions had to be made. In order to get the numbers to work we had to put off the replacement of a retiring employee, trim the budget for housing demolition, put off the replacement of the roof at the Senior Citizens Building, reduce our budget for the City Attorney, rebid our health insurance, and a number of other smaller reductions across all departments of the City.

I appreciate the willingness of department heads and the council to work towards getting us where we needed to be financially. After all was said and done, the budget that was adopted for 2017 was a balanced budget, with a small surplus.

Looking ahead I am VERY excited about what 2017 will likely bring to Murphysboro. Set to unfold are a number of projects that I think will help our town grow and in turn expand our tax base and provide a better quality of life for all residents of Murphysboro. Some of the items included on the list of upcoming positive developments include the promise of a new hotel at the former Apple Tree Inn site. Expect to see a lot of action happen on that site starting in March of 2017.

Also, the announcement of the reopening of the Murphysboro I.Y.C. as a transitional center for the Department of Corrections should provide more than 100 jobs in our community. Furthermore, I have been in communication with the ownership of the former Jackson County Rehabilitation Center, and they assure me that they will have their Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation center up and running in 2017. This too will create an additional 50+ jobs within the city. Other items such as the expansion of One Hot Cookie, a new coffee shop opening behind the Courthouse, Silkworm's recent expansion, and additional projects simmering below the surface makes me feel confident that this coming year could be a great one for Murphysboro.

Also, I want to let residents know that the Murphysboro Cruise Nights are going forward in 2017. Josh Sayer, is helping to coordinate those events this year, and I appreciate his willingness to step up and keep that great event going. If you are interested in helping with Cruise Night, you can call 684-4961 or email mayor@murphysboro.com and I will get you in contact with Mr. Sayer.

I would also mention that we have changed the City Council Meeting time to 6 p.m. on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month. The earlier start time has allowed for the meetings to conclude at a more reasonable hour.

Lastly, I would remind residents that I am available to meet regarding issues facing the city every week. If you have a question, concern, or just want to chat call 684-4961 and set up an appointment with me.

Mayor Will Stephens

www.murphysboro-il.gov or 618.684.4961