



# The Village Press

"Preserving the Light for Future Generations"

Fall 2009  
Issue 12

## IMMEDIATE CRISIS – URGENT!

by Ward Randol

On September 9, City Manager John Szerlag went public with a Memo to Troy's Mayor and City Council showing that the City of Troy will be in extremely serious financial trouble for at least the next five years. He said that unless a multi-million dollar projected budget deficit can be eliminated almost immediately, he will close the Museum indefinitely and let all of its staff go in the 2010-2011 fiscal year or even as soon as this coming December (2009). Under his plan, Troy's library, nature center, and community center will also be closed, among other drastic budget cuts.

This is not a test or a drill. It is not a scare tactic. This is what will happen, unless the people of Troy step up to save the Museum and our other cultural institutions. NOW.

The reason Troy seems to have gone from being a rich city to a poor city in less than a month is new information about a rapid decline in the assessed values of Troy's real estate and the taxes thereon from 2008 to 2009 and future years. Largely because of falling real estate assessments and taxable values, the City's income will decline as follows:

2009/10	\$62.0 million
2010/11	58.1 million
2011/12	54.3 million
2012/13	53.1 million
2013/14	52.2 million
2014/15	51.5 million

In other words, in only two years Troy will have \$7.7 million a year less to spend annually than it has this year. This is a 12.4% decline in revenue.

Of course this also means that our real estate taxes will drop correspondingly. The City Manager's prediction is that the City's portion (27% - about \$1,000) of the annual tax bill on the average home in Troy will be \$158 smaller next year and then an additional \$150-\$160 smaller in two years. If these amounts can be restored, they would pay for keeping our Museum and Troy's other cultural institutions open on a full-time basis as well as keeping the police force at full strength. (The other 73% of our average annual Troy tax bill – about \$3,000 – is for schools, etc.)

So, what can we do as Troy Historical Society members? (1) Educate ourselves immediately about the issues, and (2) Then let our Mayor and City Council members know how important our Museum – a full-time Museum – and its staff are to the quality of life in Troy.

If a new millage is required to restore our lost taxes, we should ask Council to put it on the ballot for a vote by the people at the next election. NOW.

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I hope you will make your voices heard for the Museum. Loud and clear! NOW!

In addition, the City Manager's Memo shows that Troy has a \$10.5 million "Unreserved Fund", a \$2.1 million budget stabilization "rainy day fund", and a \$1.2 million "brownfield revolving loan fund" on its books, each of which can be tapped to some extent to help balance the budget in the short run. Nevertheless, the only long-term way to keep the Museum going as we have known it for over forty years and especially the last ten years is to keep the City taxes on our homes at or near their present levels.

By the way, Troy already has the lowest millage of any city in Oakland County, and fewer city employees per 1,000 residents. There isn't much left for the so-called tax fighters to cut, without removing Troy from the lists of "best place to live in Michigan" for a long time to come.

What kind of a city do we want Troy to be? The people who made Troy a city 54 years ago, and their successors, clearly wanted it to be a cut above the rest. That's why we have such a great Museum and other outstanding cultural institutions. Do we want to lose all of that for a \$300 reduction in our annual City taxes? When you get right down to it, we buy civilization with our taxes.

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## **Site Plan Approval**

The Troy Heritage Campaign and architects Gene Hopkins, Tamara Burns and Neal Billetdeaux (JJR landscape architect) ushered the new site plan for the expanded and completed Troy Museum through the approval process this summer. The Board of Zoning Appeals granted six variances for the 50-foot setbacks for community facilities that are mandated by city ordinance. Variances for the location of the Niles-Barnard House, the new parking areas along Wattles and Livernois, and a bus loop with turf parking adjacent to Lange Street were all authorized by the BZA.

The site plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission three times. Upon their approval in July, Tom Strat, an architect serving on the commission, commended the Troy Historical Society and their architects for developing an outstanding plan that reflected good use of the site, sustainability and excellent design. Finally, on August 17, Troy City Council unanimously approved the Preliminary Site Plan. Final administrative approval of the plan is completed through the Planning Department.

The relocation of the Niles-Barnard House is the first step in implementing the plan. A Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals for a construction manager to coordinate contractors for this project has been written. The Heritage Campaign Committee plans to release the RFQ/RFP this fall and relocate the house in the spring. They have had positive discussions with the Barnard family regarding this delay.

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## **A "Hot" New Book Supports the Heritage Campaign**

*Fire Calls and Station House Stories, An Illustrated History of Troy's Volunteer Fire Department*, is scheduled for release in November, just in time for Christmas. This 98-page, hardcover book is filled with the first person accounts of the volunteers who organized and staffed Troy's six stations. The book is not about fires, trucks or equipment. Rather, it is the story the dedicated men and women who joined Troy's unique corps and of the culture that developed among the volunteers and their families.

The information for this book was gathered by a terrific committee of retired firefighters, museum staff and volunteers. Fred Barnard initiated the book concept 18 months ago with two goals. As a member of a family that includes three generations of volunteer firefighters, he wanted to chronicle the history and culture of an institution that remains an important part of his life.

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Second, he envisioned the publication of the book as a fundraiser for the Troy Heritage Campaign. Therefore all proceeds from book sales will be earmarked to fund the relocation of the Niles-Barnard house to the Troy Museum & Historic Village.

Copies of *Fire Calls and Station House Stories* will be available at the Troy Museum gift shop for \$28, including tax. The gift shop accepts cash, checks and credit cards. Please purchase your copies and support the campaign!

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## THS Scholarships Go Quickly

In August, the THS Board of Directors approved the allocation of \$1,000 for five field trip scholarships for classrooms with students from financially strapped families. To qualify for a scholarship, teachers were required to submit an application with verification that 1/3 of his/her students received free lunches and a letter of approval for the field trip from the principal. Scholarships to qualifying classrooms were awarded on a first-come-first-serve basis. The following classrooms were approved by a scholarship review committee composed of Ward Randol, Cathy Ogawa and Ron Bernard:

- Two 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes from Alcott Elementary in Pontiac
- One 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade class from Malcolm X Academy in Detroit

The museum is grateful for the opportunity to provide great learning experiences for these young people. Thank you THS members. Your contributions make this program possible.

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### Museum Hours:

Monday-Saturday 9:00 am-4:30 pm

Closed Sundays

### Holiday Closings:

In honor of national holidays, the Museum will be closed Nov 26-29, Dec 24-27, and Dec 31-Jan 3, 2010.

### Volunteer Opportunities

Many opportunities are available to new and returning volunteers, and junior (teen) volunteers. Call for info about volunteer orientation.

Troy Historical Society  
Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (D/M): \_\_\_\_\_

*Enclose payment for membership in the following categories:*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Single membership | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family (children under 21) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Couple            | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 50 Non-profit Institution    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Individual Life  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Business                  |

Please check if you would like Newsletters via E-mail:

Memorial contributions and bequests are welcome.

Your interests or personal collections/Your history in Troy: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Help preserve Troy's history. Send this form and your payment to:  
Troy Historical Society, P.O. Box 6, Troy, MI 48099

We care about our members and would like to keep updated on any cares or concerns. Please feel free to call Gerry Young at 586-802-1225.

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How do you like our new look?

Any questions or comments

please send to:

The Village Press

Attn: Alison Iceman

P.O. Box 6

Troy MI, 48099

Or e-mail us at:

[thevillagepress@troyhistory.org](mailto:thevillagepress@troyhistory.org)

We welcome any members' articles for the newsletter, subject to content and space limits.

# Thanks for Supporting the Community Foundation Challenge

By Loraine Campbell

On August 18, 2009 the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan pledged \$1,000,000 to be matched .50 on the dollar, for donations of \$25- \$10,000 made on August 18 to participating Cultural Alliance of SE Michigan member organizations, including The Troy Museum & Historic village.

The \$1,000,000 was completely allocated by 3 PM on August 18<sup>th</sup> as scores of donors logged on and contributed much needed funds to 75 organizations. In response to donors who could not get into the system, the CFSEM pledged an additional \$250,000 at 6 PM. Those funds were allocated by 9 PM.

The event certainly demonstrated that many people care a great deal about museums, theaters, zoos and other cultural organizations and do want to support them. However, it also revealed the limitations of technology as the online donation system failed throughout the day. The Community Foundation and Cultural Alliance apologized profusely for the technical problems donors encountered.

Please know how much the Museum staff appreciated the Troy Historical Society supporters who made online donations or mailed checks to the museum afterwards. The donations and CFSEM match totaled \$5,225. These funds will support the education programs provided for elementary schools at the museum in 2009/10.

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## Toys For Tots

'Tis the season! Help the U.S. Marine Corps collect toys for needy children in our area. Bring a new unwrapped toy to the Museum between Nov 30 and Dec 11 for the annual Toys for Tots campaign. On Dec 5, active-duty Marines and veterans will accept your donations in person, during A Candy Cane Christmas!

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## A Candy Cane Christmas

Saturday Dec 5  
1:00 pm-4:00 pm

Come to our red and white striped "Candy Cane" Village for a fun and festive family celebration. The first 100 visitors arriving dressed in red and white will receive a small gift. Have your camera ready as **Santa Claus** will arrive in his horse-drawn carriage at **2:00 PM** and will then be hearing children's wish lists. Try hands-on activities throughout our "Candy Cane" Village. Go back in time in our cabin and see how the pioneer family made Christmas. Enjoy a candy making demonstration and candy cane crafts for kids young and old. Visit the Candy Cane Gift Shop which will have a glittering array of stocking-stuffers for sale. Enjoy music and cookies. Fresh garlands and hot cider donated by Troy Garden Club, WNF&GA.

Fee: Adults \$3, Children (ages 6-17) \$2, Children (ages 0-5) are free.  
Park at Zion Christian Church (3668 Livernois) ¼ mile South of Wattles and ride a free shuttle to the museum.

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**Museum on Facebook!:** Follow us on Facebook! Log on to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), search for "Troy Museum & Historic Village" and become a "fan."

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## Check Us Out Online

This is a special issue of The Village Press, there is information that we feel is important and needs your attention, due to this all of our normal content has not been included in this newsletter. Please join us online to view all of the fun and enriching activities offered at the museum. Again we thank you for your continued support. <http://www.troymi.gov/Museum/>