

It's a new year and a new **legislative session** – it's time to head to Olympia once again. Unfortunately, a lot of our issues are not new. One of the biggest things that we are advocating for is restoring things that have been taken from local government. So, what does this mean to you? Well, for example, the privatization of alcohol resulted in a loss of **shared revenue** for cities, a loss that continues today. This money was used specifically for our police officers. Funding for the Police Department used to take up half of the city's general operating fund, and the goal is to stay under that 50% mark, a goal that is nearly impossible anymore – it's more like 60% and sometimes 70% of the general fund. Need a little perspective? The general fund also takes care of parks and streets and sidewalks, where there is less and less money all the time, due in part to budget cuts such as this one at the state level. Another state resource that has been cut is called the **Public Works Trust loan program**. This program allowed cities to borrow large sums of money for big projects and repay it with interest. Again, what's that mean to you? Recently, a citizen came to City Council asking for sidewalks and better lighting to keep our walking community safer. We couldn't agree more! Yet, without this ability to borrow large sums, we have to remain content with small projects. It's truly a hardship for local government to continue to fund streets. That said, we are very happy to announce that we will soon begin sidewalk construction on Milton Way across from the schools. This may appear to be a fairly small project, but it has taken the city years and a great deal of money to bring about. Lastly, we need some relief from the **public disclosure laws**. While transparency in government is absolutely an important priority, the few out there who make a profit by submitting huge public disclosure requests to multiple cities is a burden staff almost can't bear; ultimately, this burden comes out of the taxpayers' pockets. Along with other elected representatives, I will be visiting our legislature this month and asking for these things to be addressed. We will see some new faces at the legislature this year, along with some returning faces. This is a good mix – new ideas balanced by the wisdom of past history. That's exactly how I would describe our Council at the moment. We have some new members with great new ideas, who shine a bright new light on our Council. We also have returning council members, who have spent countless hours studying issues with the perspective of history. I am very much looking forward to the wonderful things that we will accomplish with this mix.

The **Milton neon sign** is lit! I love this old sign. The problem was trying to put new technology on an old sign. Sometimes the old way is the best way. But other times the old has to go away. Such was the case with our old website, and we now have a brand new one – please take time to visit, get acquainted with it, and don't hesitate to email me with suggestions on how to make it more user friendly for you.

So much work goes on behind the scenes to keep the city moving. I would like to take this moment in this new year to acknowledge all the work of the **chairs of our volunteer boards and commissions**. Sandy Parr is bringing new light and new ways as chair of our Senior Activity Board. Check out what's going on over there – they're having fun! I'd also like thank Kent Ross, chair of the Park Board – he's very dedicated to a task that's not easy (back to that funding thing). April Balsley is the chair of the Event Committee – if you know April, you know they're having too much fun, and if you don't know April, where have you been?! And finally, Rose Reeves is chair of the Planning Commission, continuing to help us navigate some very difficult land-use issues. Council could not make the decisions they do without the well-thought-out advice of our volunteer boards and commissions. And by the way, there's room on all of them for one more! If you would like to know more about this great opportunity, as well as what's going on with Council and in the city in general, please check out our new website.

Here's to 2016!