

The New Year has begun, and we have our work cut out for us. You may not be aware of it, but a lot has been going on behind the scenes in the City of Milton. Several months ago we began a **finance software change**, because what we had was not compatible with Washington State financial reporting to the Auditor's office for Cash Basis Cities. It made it very difficult to reconcile to the bank statements, and if you can believe it, it used to have to be adjusted by hand. Wow - 2015 and we're doing our books by hand?! That was the reason for changing to a Cash Basis Accounting program. The auditors spent several months with us in 2014 and identified some problems. We are very grateful for having the experience of working directly with them, and I personally want to thank the Washington State Auditor's Office for their assistance. We are solving the discrepancies; this is a good thing, and it is exciting to have it done. I do realize the changeover has not always been easy for everyone in the City; there have been some utility billing issues, and we do apologize for that. We are working as fast as we can to correct those issues.

City Council, as well as the Planning Commission, have spent a lot of hours over a long period of time on another item in our workload – working out the very complicated issues with the passing of **the legalization of marijuana**. It's not an issue of whether marijuana should be legal or not. You the citizens have voted, and it is. So as you keep reading, please keep in mind that this is no longer about marijuana. This now is part of Milton's vision and the comprehensive plan for the City. Recently we held an Open House showing all the work that has been done on the comp plan, and frankly it's quite a beautiful document. It details how we see our city growing over the next 20 years. While this has been a very laborious process, it also has been an excellent example of our democracy. This is your city to plan and grow as you see fit. Which brings me to something I need to ask for your help for: Should we or should we not allow marijuana retail stores in our city? And if we should, where? And with what restrictions? For example, should they be located next to our grocery stores? Should they be down on Pacific Highway in our new annexation area? I and Council cannot answer these questions alone. City Council has voted to ban the selling of all marijuana because of these and other unanswered questions. We have decided to form **a committee to advise Council** with answers to these very serious questions. This is your opportunity; your opinion matters in the City of Milton. Please do not give up your right to be heard. If you would be interested in sitting on this committee, which will meet once a month, please stop by or call City Hall, or email me, and we will get you out an application right away. We need to hear from you!

On a lighter note, but requiring no less work, the **Event Committee** has begun the planning of 2015 Milton Days. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that put together our 2014 events – Milton Days, the Craft Bazaar, and the Tree Lighting. All three were hugely successful events. This is 100% due to the people who volunteer their time so, again, thank you. And a special thank you to last year's Event Committee chair, Susan Johnson. There's plenty of room for more helping hands, and this is the perfect time to get involved – the ground floor of planning for the new year. Again, applications are available online and at City Hall.

Speaking of planning, the three cities of Fife, Milton, and Edgewood spent a lot of time planning and implementing new bus routes 503 and 504, circulator routes through our cities. One of the reasons for this was to try to better serve our citizens and to get closer to equalizing the amount of taxes we pay versus services we receive. During the year these routes were running, they did not have the participation needed in order to continue them. It simply did not make good business sense. A lot of work went into this by **Pierce Transit** and our three cities – I would like to think of this not as the end, but as a learning opportunity as to what worked and what did not work. As for someone who has purposely set out to ride our routes, I have some idea as to what some of the problems are, and I have no intention of giving up on fixing those problems. We need buses that pick up the people who need the service and take them to where they need to go. I will not quit working on this and I plan to attend and speak at the next Pierce Transit board meeting on February 9th in Lakewood. Let me know if you'd like to go with me. I will not be taking the bus, however.



Photo taken February 2014, marking the start of the circulator routes 503 and 504.
Those routes are being discontinued effective 2/14/15.

Lastly, we have had some beautiful days during January; it makes you wonder if spring isn't just around the corner. Keep your eyes open for the coming of spring and the completion of the new ADA bathroom in Community Park. Really can't wait to see that.