

The Melcher-Dallas Miner

What you can do for your city

“Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” JFK’s famous quote is a timeliness reminder that government can only serve its citizens effectively if the citizens it was created to serve get involved. If we see government as something to serve, rather than to be served by, what kind of difference could that make in our city, our county, our state, and our nation?

With the hard work and assistance of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and critical input from citizens, the City of Melcher-Dallas has developed a comprehensive plan. This document takes an in depth look at the city’s current strengths and weaknesses, and provides some projections about what the city might look like in 2030.

“Older folks” in town remember when the streets of Dallas were sprayed with oil every summer to hold down the dust. Kids rode bikes in the stinky, tar-like substance that flipped on to the back of legs and bicycle fenders. The thought of living, walking and riding in oil now seems dangerous and absurd. Many families were dependent on a well and a septic tank in the back yard. It’s amazing to think of how much the city has changed in the last 45 years.

One of the main functions of government is to create laws and policies that help protect the health and safety of its citizens. Another responsibility the city holds is to help all citizens and neighborhoods protect property values. This protection comes in the development and enforcement of city ordinances designed to ensure that property values are stable and that the poor condition of one home does not adversely affect the property values of surrounding homes.

The City Council has approved the formulation of a Citizen’s Advisory Board to take an in-depth look at issues in town that may either deter or support the city’s efforts to improve property values and ensure the health and safety of all citizens. Melcher-Dallas is at a critical junction in its history. There is so much to offer....a rich coal mining heritage, a vibrant town square with thriving businesses, and a school system that offers our youth a chance to shine.

From the generous people who stock and staff the food pantry to the dozens of citizens who serve on boards and committees, it is obvious that residents of Melcher-Dallas understand the importance of “doing” for their local government. The time to provide positive feedback on ways to help our city grow and continue to be a positive place to learn, work and live is now. Send your great ideas to mdcityhall@windstream.net or stop by City Hall.

When 2030 arrives, we can all be proud of the fact that our input and hard work helped the city make as many positive strides as we’ve seen in the past 45 years.



Important Dates

- Water bills due by Feb. 15th to avoid penalties
- Informational Meeting on proposed repurpose of Local Option Sales Tax funds, Feb. 13 at 6 p.m. at Community Center

Mayor

Barbara VanWyk

City Council

Brad Robbins

David Ernst

Chris Heaton

Mark Herold

Terry Fisher

(Mayor Pro-Tem)



But I love that old car!

The City of Melcher-Dallas recently embarked on an effort to clean up dozens of junk vehicles in town. People have many questions about how the city determines whether the car sitting in the yard is a junker. The answers lie in city ordinance Chapter 51, "Junk and Junk Vehicles." If your car has any of the following characteristics, the city considers it a junk vehicle: 1. Broken glass; 2. Broken, loose or missing parts; 3. Serves as a Habitat for Nuisance Animals or Insects; 4. Has Flammable Fuel; 5. Is inoperable (hasn't run for 30 days or more); 6. Is defective or in an obsolete condition.

While you may be very sentimentally attached to your vehicle and wish to repair it when time and money permit, your neighbor probably does not have the same attachment and considers your car an eyesore. You could stay off the junk car radar by accomplishing these few tasks: 1. Ensure your car is on gravel or pavement (not sitting in the grass, which is a violation of the parking ordinance in town); 2. Make sure the tires are aired up and there are no broken windows; 3. Keep a license plate with a current registration sticker on your car. If the car has all of these things, it is less likely to be spotted and cited as a junk vehicle.

"Mere licensing of such vehicle shall not constitute a defense to the finding that the vehicle is a junk vehicle." (Chapter 51.2).

Newbie News



It's so exciting to have new residents moving to town. Please meet Liam and Bianca Ahrens. They are half of

the Ahrens family that recently moved to Melcher-Dallas. Father, James, and big sister, Amyah make up the other half of this lovely family that moved from upstate New York, where their families still reside. Though they miss their families, they have enjoyed the quiet lifestyle and friendly neighbors in their new home. The family relocated for James' job in Urbandale. Bianca says they fell in love with their house (Travis and Ashley Lamb's old house by the railroad tracks) and are adjusting very quickly to their new town, home and school. Welcome to Melcher-Dallas Ahrens family!!!

Be part of an important election

In 2011, the voters of Melcher-Dallas held an election to approve a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), often referred to as the one-cent tax. All voters in Marion County approved this tax. When the citizens of Melcher-Dallas approved the LOST, the funds were earmarked specifically for roads and road projects. The city has, for many years now, complied with the wishes of the voters and corresponding laws by utilizing the LOST funds to help pay down road debt and fund continued upkeep and improvement of roads.

While maintenance and improvement of roads are an ongoing project, the city also receives approximately \$150,000 per year from the State of Iowa's Road Use Tax (RUT) program. This money has served to keep city streets in good repair and fund all street expenses allowed under the RUT program. These special revenues (LOST AND RUT) help to fund expensive projects that would otherwise be difficult for a town with a population of 1,288 to support.

The needs and priorities of the City of Melcher-Dallas have changed since the LOST was implemented. Specifically, there is an increasing number of houses identified as dangerous or derelict buildings that must be removed. The City receives constant pressure to remove the burned building on the square. Estimates for this demolition range from \$50,000—\$70,000. The city is simply unable to fund these types of projects, as well as the climbing costs of upkeep for city owned buildings, the public park, etc., through general property tax income.

The City Council of Melcher-Dallas passed a Resolution calling for a vote of citizens the first Tuesday in May to consider widening the approved uses of the LOST funds. This would allow the city to fund projects such as the demolition of derelict houses and buildings. Please plan to attend an informational meeting to be held at the Community Center on February 13 at 6 p.m. to hear more about this proposal and to provide input.



Mitch & Linda Enfield enjoy watching grandkids grow up surrounded by friends and family, just as they did.

“We wanted our kids and grandkids to be raised around family.”



Life as a “Lifer”

The City of Melcher-Dallas has experienced many changes in the last 50 years. There are people in town who have lived through a great many of these changes. People who were born and raised in Melcher-Dallas sometimes move away and never return. Some move away and come back home to the place they call home in their later years. And some born and raised in Melcher-Dallas chose to marry, raise a family, and grow old in the town where they grew up, surrounded by long-term friends and family.

One of these couples is Mitch and Linda Enfield. Mitch and Linda were both raised on what used to be the Melcher side of town. They married in 1976 and raised three children in Melcher-Dallas.

When asked if they ever considered leaving, Linda says, “We never did. It was really important to us that our kids and grandkids were raised around family.”

When asked what they love most about living in Melcher-Dallas, Linda said they love that when someone has trouble or falls on tough times, the whole community rallies around them to provide support.

Mitch and Linda now live on what used to be the Dallas side of town. They are happy with their decision to stay in Melcher-Dallas and raise their family, and the community has also benefited greatly from their decision. Thank you, Mitch & Linda, for choosing to stay in your hometown and raise a family in Melcher-Dallas.

Your City Employees

Mike Damon—Sewer & Water Director
 Gary Comer—Streets & Parks Director
 Mike McCarty—Streets
 Jacob Hoch—Police Lieutenant
 Steve Johns—Chief of Police
 Ruth Ryun— Deputy Clerk
 Jenny Knust—Clerk/Treasurer
 Steph Ripperger—Admin. Assistant
 Lori Davis—Librarian
 Fran Smith—Library Assistant
 Bill Cooper & Janet McBride—Recycling

Employee Spotlight

Mike Damon
Water & Sewer Director



Mike Damon is one of the longest serving city employees, beginning his position in 2011. Mike’s primary responsibilities are to ensure the safety of the city’s water and the functionality of the sewer system. Mike lives east of Melcher-Dallas with his wife, Barb. They have four children, all living with their families in the Melcher-Dallas school district. Barb has worked for the M-D school system for many years. Mike and Barb enjoy spending time with their nine grandchildren, raising horses, and tending to their family farm.

When asked what he likes best about his job, Mike said he enjoys working around people he has known all his life and being close to home and family. If you don’t know Mike, you should know that he has a great sense of humor. His first response when asked what he likes about his job was that he doesn’t fear falling in a ditch and not being found, as there’s always someone looking out for him. ☺

If you appreciate your safe, clean drinking water, let Mike know!

A monthly newsletter for the citizens of

Melcher-Dallas, Iowa

If you have an idea for a story or would like to nominate someone to be featured in a recurring feature (i.e., “Life as a Lifer” or “Newbie Spotlight”) or have a memory to add to “Trip Down Memory Lane”, please contact Jenny Knust, City Clerk, at 641-947-6501 or e-mail your memories to Jenny at: mdcityhall@windstream.net.

Do you have mad graphic art skills?

The City of Melcher-Dallas would like to freshen up its image by creating a new city logo. If you would like to participate, please follow these guidelines when developing and submitting your logo for consideration. Submissions will be posted in town and on the city’s website. Citizens will have the opportunity to vote on their favorite, with the City Council holding ultimate responsibility for choosing the winner.

Please submit your entry following these guidelines:

1. Winner must be willing to sign over usage rights to the city.
2. The logo should be submitted in JPEG format.
3. The words “City of Melcher-Dallas” and “Est. 1986” must appear in the logo.
4. All submissions should be submitted to City Hall by 4 p.m. on February 28, 2019.

Whether you have aspirations to be a graphic artist and are building a portfolio or you just like a good competition, your winning entry will give you bragging rights for years to come. Call Jenny Knust, City Clerk, at 641-947-6501 for more information.

A Trip Down Memory Lane

Do you remember:

- When the noon whistle blew every day?
- When you could fill a sack with candy for a quarter?
- When you waited at Flanagan’s store to catch the bus to the high school because almost nobody had their own car to drive to school?
- How Fernando Gianni, the Melcher Postmaster, could cheer you up just by saying hello?
- The smell of Buck’s cigars when you rode your bike to the Dallas post office to pick up your mail?
- That the old elementary school had signs for “Girls” and “Boys” above the two entrance doors?

Do You Know Your City Ordinances?

True or False?

1. It is legal to park on the grass as long as its in my back yard.
2. It’s okay to let my dog run or walk off the leash as long as I’m with her/him.
3. My grass and weeds cannot be over eight inches or the city can mow my yard and charge me \$100.
4. My swimming pool has to be fenced in.
5. I can keep my pitbull on a chain tied around my tree.

1. False. Parking ordinance prohibits parking in grass.
2. False.
3. True. Dogs must be on a leash at all times outside your home.
4. False (new zoning ordinance eliminated fencing requirement).
5. Pitbulls are classified as a vicious breed and must be inside a fence.