

The Melcher-Dallas Miner

Housing funds may be available soon

In its continued efforts to maintain the city's housing stock and stave off declining property values, the City of Melcher-Dallas is exploring two housing programs that could assist residents in making needed repairs. The City is considering applying for grant funds for two programs:

Architectural Barriers Program—Provides forgivable loans (zero interest loans that convert to grants after five years of occupancy) to homeowners who have modest incomes and need to make modifications to their home in order to live comfortably. Improvements could include such upgrades as wheelchair ramps, bathroom and kitchen modifications, widened hallways and doorways, and other repairs that could make the home more accessible for people of all physical abilities. To apply for this program, residents must be at least 60 years of age and meet the federal definition of "severely disabled." For more information, please go to the city's website (melcherdallasiowa.org) or call city hall at 641-947-6501.

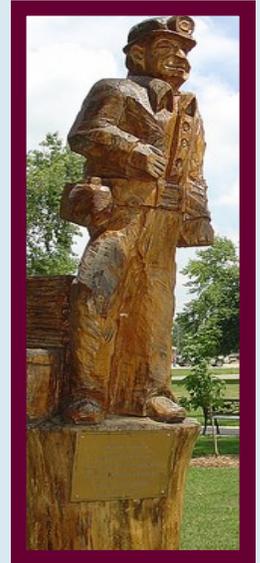
Exterior Improvements Program—Provides forgivable loans to homeowners who have modest incomes and need to fix up the outside of their homes. Work might include new siding, windows, door, roof, foundation, etc. There is no age limit for this program.

There is no cost to apply, and may only cost a resident about \$17 to participate in the program if the grant is awarded. Any homeowner in Melcher-Dallas can apply for ONE of the programs. The city is gauging interest in these two programs, with a formal application process to follow if there is sufficient interest to proceed. Interested residents can go to the city's website to download and fill out the form indicating interest in the program or call city hall to have the form sent via mail or email.

City leaders are hopeful this will provide a source of financing to repair homes in lieu of citing and fining residents for violations of city ordinances related to the condition of their property. For more information, contact City Hall at 641-947-6501.

New memorial opportunity in city park

Park bench memorial spots in the park are full, and there is a waiting list. However, the city council recently approved the addition of memorial picnic tables. The first phase will include three or four tables on the south side of the park. Park visitors could picnic while keeping an eye on children on the playground. The city will install the first table to enable residents to determine if they would like to claim the table as a memorial. The cost of the table (including installation) will be approximately \$1,300. For more information, please call City Hall at 641-947-6501.



Important Dates

September 7

Labor Day—City Hall Closed

September 8

City Council Meeting

6 p.m.—Fire Station

Public may attend by audio
or teleconference

September 19

City-wide clean-up day, 8—11 a.m.

October 13

6 p.m.—Fire Station

Mayor

Barbara Van Wyk

City Council

Mark Moon

Seth Williams

Chris Heaton

Mark Herold

Terry Fisher (Mayor Pro-Tem)

Penalties and shut-offs return

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March, the City Council agreed to suspend both penalties for late payment and water shut-offs through July. This break to customers cost the city thousands of dollars, but the council understood that some families might struggle with financial issues caused by the pandemic.

Water bills sent out in late July were subject to late penalties if not paid by August 15, and the city returned to shutting water off when payment was not received by the shut-off date shown on utility bills.

Many people call in to City Hall to negotiate an extension on the payment date. The City Clerk's office does not have the authority to reset the shut-off date or negotiate payment plans with residents. All requests for payment plans must be approved by the City Council.

City Ordinance #92, "Water Rates," directs the assessment of a \$50 reconnect fee for an account that is not paid by the disconnect date. These are accounts that have already had a ten percent penalty applied for late payment. This "double whammy" creates a situation wherein a resident who is not paying on time ends up almost doubling the amount due by the 15th on the utility bill.

Meters are read between the 21st and 23rd of each month. Residents will receive their sewer and water bill late in the month and should plan to have payment made by the 15th of the following month to avoid penalties and shut-offs. Residents needing a receipt for payment can use the walk-up window at city hall. The drop box is always available, as is the option to pay online at:

melcherdallasiowa.org.

Shed your nuisance—increase your value

The city has begun to issue enforcement letters to residents who have dilapidated sheds on their property. These sheds, which sometimes become almost invisible to the owner, serve as an eyesore in the neighborhood and frequently become a home for rodents and feral cats. The city recently paid for the pick-up and haul away of feral cats from one abandoned property to the tune of \$1,000.

A change in the nuisance ordinance enacted in 2019 requires all accessory structures (including sheds) to meet the following requirements:

1. Exterior wall surfaces must be painted and/or maintained with appropriate exterior wall materials, including wood, vinyl, steel or metal siding, stucco, exterior insulation system materials, or brick or similar masonry materials.
2. All doors and windows must be

functional and in proper working order. No plastic wraps or tarps can cover the structure or be used for doorways or windows.

Home owners who wish to tear down a dilapidated shed and put up a new structure would not need to submit a building permit if the new shed would sit in the same spot. However, if the old shed was on skids and the new shed will be fastened down, a building permit would be required.

If you have a dilapidated shed on your property that you are currently using, consider rehabilitating the shed by putting on a fresh coat of paint and restoring missing doors and windows. If the shed is not being used, consider removing the structure to help increase your property value and those of your neighbors by eliminating the eyesore and the opportunity for rodents and feral cats to make it their home.

ISU report details M-D housing characteristics

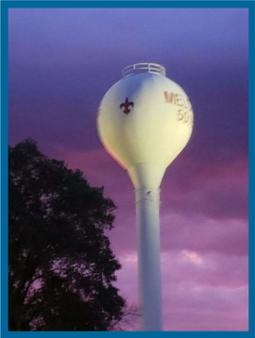
A report distributed to all Iowa cities by the University of Iowa provides housing characteristics which have a direct impact on the financial condition of a city. Newer homes tend to be assessed at higher values than comparable older homes. This translates into higher property tax revenues which has implications for local school district and city budgets. The reverse scenario of a higher number of older homes presents issues for the city, including lower property values and dilapidated properties that tend to become eyesores. These dilapidated homes tend to also become a potential breeding grounds for antisocial activities, causing the city to allocate resources to keep the areas safe and habitable. Local examples include addition of a full-time police department and development of a rental housing inspection program to ensure the health and safety of all residents.

The graph below reveals significant statistics regarding the age of the Melcher-Dallas housing stock. These statistics reinforce the importance of maintaining existing houses to avoid a situation wherein the city property taxes are inadequate to fund basic infrastructure and keep the city moving in a positive direction.

Total Housing Units:	619		
Built 2010 or Later:	1%	Built 1960 to 1969:	4.7%
Built 2000-2009:	6.5%	Built 1950 to 1959:	8.9%
Built 1990 to 1999:	4.5%	Built 1940 to 1949:	7.6%
Built 1980 to 1989:	6.5%	Built 1939 or earlier:	48%
Built 1970 to 1979:	12.4%		

Your Council in action

Water tower showing wear



Viking Industrial Painting presented the City Council with estimates to repaint the water tower, which is showing some wear. The 15-year-old tower will need repainted inside and out. While the exterior could be redesigned, it was the council's preference to retain the zip codes on the tower in honor of the fact that, back in the 1960s, the original town of Melcher was the first city in the country to have a zip code on the water tower.

Casey's expands liquor sales

The City Council recently approved an expansion of liquor sales at Casey's General Store. Casey's will build an addition on to the store to accommodate the sale of hard liquor.



Rental Housing Inspection Program Resumes

The Rental Housing Inspection Program was derailed by Covid 19 just as inspections had begun in March. The program has resumed, and the city will soon issue its first rental housing permit. Tenants have expressed gratitude for the city's interventions in helping them ensure the rental home they live in is safe and in good condition. The Rental Housing Inspection program that was approved by the Council in 2019 has already made a big difference in the condition of rental properties in the city. All homes not occupied by the owner or a child or parent of the owner, are subject to inspection and require a permit.

New roof for museum

Council voted to move forward with replacement of the roof on the building currently housing the museum. At a previous meeting, the council voted to rehabilitate the building, including a new roof, wiring and updates to the outside and inside of the building. The ultimate goals are to preserve the historic building and eventually move City Hall to the square. Upgrades will be made over a three- to five-year period utilizing Local Option Sales Tax funds.

Right-of-way tree damage to sidewalks

Council clarified that the city will replace sidewalk sections damaged by trees in the right-of-way only if the homeowner is replacing the entire sidewalk. Residents planning to replace sidewalks who have damage from right-of-way trees should contact City Hall to obtain approval prior to replacement.

Your City Employees

Gary Comer—Sewer & Water Director

Mike McCarty—Streets/Sewer/Water

Cameron Davis—Public works

Jacob Hoch—Chief of Police

Dylan Forkner—Police Officer

Zachary Kalvig—Reserve Officer

Stephanie Ripperger — Deputy Clerk

Jenny Knust—Clerk/Treasurer

Lori Davis—Library Director

Fran Smith—Library Assistant

Bill Cooper & Janet McBride—

Recycling

Curt Seddon—Fire Chief

Employee Spotlight

Cameron Davis



The city's newest employee will be a familiar face to all. Cameron Davis recently accepted the public works part-time position. He will be assisting Gary and Mike with the city's water and sewer systems and will also help with mowing and snow removal.

Cameron is a 2019 graduate of Melcher-Dallas schools and is currently serving as a volunteer on the fire department. He lives on Main Street and enjoys living in a small town. When you see him out and about, please congratulate him on his appointment as a city public works employee.

What's up with the library, Lori?

The library reopened on August 17, with the following precautions in place:

- ◆ Limit of five patrons or one family unit (if greater than five) at a time.
- ◆ Social distancing in place. Every three carpet squares=6 ft.
- ◆ Children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.
- ◆ Water fountains may be used only for refill cups or bottles.
- ◆ Hand sanitizer is available.
- ◆ Computers available by appointment only.
- ◆ Only two computers on at a time. No games or videos.
- ◆ No Legos, toys or STEM kits at this time.
- ◆ Thirty-minute timeframe per patron.
- ◆ Masks are recommended.
- ◆ One person in the library shelves at a time.

Library Hours:

Monday 9-3; Tuesday 11-5; Wednesday 12-6; Thursday 11-5; Friday 11-5; and Saturday 9 –11.

Patrons who are uncomfortable entering the library may continue to call for curbside pick-up. Hope to see you back in the library soon!

Lori Dhabalt-Davis, Librarian

NEW BOOKS THIS MONTH

Two Steps Forward, A Seal's Struggle, and A Seal's Desire,
Cora Seton

Winter at the Beach and Welcome to Moonlight Harbor,
Sheila Roberts

Winter's Web and Winter's Storm, Mary Stone

A Family for Gracie and A Home for Hannah, Amy Lillard

The Wedding Dress, The Wedding Chapel, The Wedding Shop,
and *The Wedding Dress Christmas,* Rachel Hauck

The Call of Zulina, The Voyage of Promise, and The Triumph of Grace, Kay Marshall Strom

The Christmas House, The Farm House, and The School House,
Elizabeth Bromke

Contradictions, Misunderstandings, and No Attachments,
Tiffany King

Shark's Edge, Shark's Pride, and Shark's Rise, Angel Payne
1st Case and Hush, James Patterson

Don't shoot the messenger

The City recently sent out several enforcement letters in an effort to help all residents maintain property values and to entice people looking for a home to settle in Melcher-Dallas. These letters, most of which are generated from complaints, are approved by and coming from the City Council. Citizens are respectfully asked to not direct anger toward city employees who are merely doing the job they are paid to do.

A Trip Down Memory Lane

Do you remember:

- ◆ When the Dallas sports teams, the rockets, were black and orange, and the Melcher sports teams were maroon and white. But were the Melcher teams the miners, the warriors or the tigers?
- ◆ When there was a skating rink on the south side of the square?
- ◆ When the Sportsman's corner was located where Casey's now sits?
- ◆ When you could fill a brown paper bag with candy at Flanagan's store for a quarter?
- ◆ When, for a short period of time, the law allowed 18-year-olds to drink alcohol (until they figured out high school seniors were sometimes coming to school intoxicated)?

(If you have special memories of growing up in Melcher-Dallas, please

Do You Know Your City Ordinances?

1. I can keep an inoperable vehicle in my yard as long as it has a license plate and registration.
2. I can pile my front porch full of junk—it's my property.
3. I can buy and set up a tarp shed from Menards for my car.
4. If my garage door rots out, I can replace it with a heavy tarp or board it up until I can afford a new door.
5. I can be fined \$200 plus a \$95 filing fee for failing to comply with the city's nuisance ordinance.
6. I can have up to 15 chickens in my yard, as long as they are in a coop during non-daylight hours.

1. False. Ordinance #51 says, "Mere licensing of a vehicle shall not constitute a defense to the finding that vehicle is a junk vehicle. 2. False. Ordinance #51 prohibits junk in the yard, including toys, children's toys, and lawn clutter. 3. Ordinance #50 prohibits the use of tarps as a covering for accessory structures. 4. False. Ordinance #50 requires garage doors to be operational and of like materials. 5. True. 6. True. Ordinance #55 allows 15 chickens, which must be in a coop during non-daylight hours but prohibits keeping roosters in city limits.