

TO: MAYOR LANDRY AND NOVI CITY COUNCIL
FROM: COUNCILMEMBER ANDREW MUTCH
SUBJECT: FISCAL TRANSPARENCY
DATE: MAY 28, 2009
CC: CLAY PEARSON, MARYANNE CORNELIUS

Summary: Increase transparency of city's financial information and spending of Federal stimulus dollars through the city's web site.

Background: Over the past year, there has been a push to improve citizen access to financial information at all levels of government in Michigan. At the state level, the Mackinac Center has been leading the effort to have the state government and school districts make their financial reports available to the public. Locally, the Novi School District has been recognized for placing their check registers on line. At the federal level, President Obama has committed to improving the public's ability to track the spending of federal dollars being provided through the various federal stimulus efforts by providing a web site focused on stimulus spending.

Michigan Transparency: <http://www.michigantransparency.org/>

Novi School District:

<http://www.novi.k12.mi.us/District/businessAndFinance/WebPages/CheckRun.aspx>

Recovery.Gov: <http://www.recovery.gov/>

Warrants:

Back in August 2008, I asked the city administration about adding the contents of the warrants approved each meeting by City Council online with the other agenda items. Since that time, a complete version of the warrant, which includes the check number, recipient and amount, has been posted to the city web site along with the other agenda items. However, unless one knows that the warrants are posted with each packet, a person interested in reviewing the city's expenditures has no easy way of finding those. Even if one knows where to find the warrants, one has to review each packet to find them. Unlike the Novi School District, there's no single place where one can view all of the individual warrants. It would improve our efforts to make city expenditures more transparent if there was a single page where each of the warrants could be linked. Once created, this page could be highlighted on our web site.

Federal Stimulus Spending:

There has been a lot of public discussion about the proposals for federal stimulus spending and ensuring accountability and transparency in how those dollars are spent. Novi is already slated to receive federal stimulus funds for road projects and energy efficiency block grant projects. There may be additional federal stimulus funding that the city will receive in the upcoming months. As a recipient of millions of dollars in federal stimulus funds, the city should ensure that residents can track the progress of those projects and the expenditures of those dollars. A number of cities have set up web pages that highlight the stimulus spending in their communities and the progress towards completing those projects.

City of Grand Rapids, MI: http://www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us/index.pl?page_id=9421
City of Philadelphia, PA: <http://www.phila.gov/recovery/>
City of San Diego, CA: <http://www.sandiego.gov/stimulus/>

To assist residents in tracking our federal stimulus projects and to see the progress the city is making towards completing those projects, the city should create an online resource page where those projects can be listed and updated. Additional resources related to stimulus funding available from the state and federal government can also be made available from this web page.

Requested Action: Direct city administration to take steps to improve the visibility of the City's financial information and to provide online resources to allow residents to track the progress and use of Federal stimulus funding.

Council Goal/Strategy: Develop government structure and staff skills for effective delivery of customer services and communication with community. 2009 – 2010 goal: Continue to develop and enhance the city's electronic and web based communication with residents and businesses