

## **LATHROP PROPERTY NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE**

Your City Council and Mayor have been active this summer on a number of projects including the Lathrop House issue.

Here are the latest developments, as of August 21<sup>st</sup>, in our effort to find a solution that would be agreeable to the Catholic Diocese (the owner of the Lathrop House property) and its local parish, St. Joseph's, as well as the Sylvania community.

Lawyers for both sides have been meeting to find a resolution to the Lathrop House property issue. Sylvania City Council, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, voted unanimously to have Mayor Craig Stough get involved in the negotiations. The Diocese and the City of Sylvania have brought in a mediator in an attempt to reach an agreement with St. Joseph's. The mediator has been gathering the necessary facts and information about the issue and is actively involved in trying to negotiate a settlement.

Meanwhile, at their August 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, City Council unanimously voted to reject the resolution by the Citizens of Sylvania which called for the City to end its efforts to acquire the Lathrop House property.

That set in motion a request by the Citizens group to present a letter asking that an initiative be placed on the ballot for November, allowing citizens the right to vote on the issue. On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, City Council will pass legislation to send this issue to the Lucas County Board of Elections.

The City's legal efforts to acquire the Lathrop House property are proceeding. In their argument to the court, the Church is contending that the City's actions "substantially burden nearly every religious function of the Parish".

Judge Ronald Bowman has been asked to rule on the Diocese's motion by September 5<sup>th</sup>. A new trial date will be set at that time, pending the status of negotiations.

It is our belief the City has not interfered with the rights of citizens to practice their religion, or worship in their church. The eminent domain proceedings became necessary when the Lathrop House was threatened with demolition before all parties involved could find a solution to the dispute. In addition, the question of access to Harroun Park became a very real issue when the Church stated that the joint parking lot agreement would expire in 11 years and would not be renewed.

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We are committed to find a solution that preserves access to Harroun Park. Our citizens enjoy the shelters for family events, sledding on the hills and for the educational activities held at the Park. We also seek an adequate site for the Lathrop House for parking and accommodating visitors to the House. The Toledo Metroparks remains interested in operating the house as an historical treasure.

Our ongoing intent is the same as that stated in our July mailing, “We continue to work toward a mutually agreeable compromise. We believe that both the Church interest in expansion and our interest in historical and park preservation can be accomplished.”

We value the contribution of St. Joseph’s to our community and the individuals who make up the St. Joseph’s family.

We continue to update our website, [www.cityofsylvania.com](http://www.cityofsylvania.com), as new developments occur. Thank you for your emails and phone calls providing us with your opinions on this issue.

Keith Haddad,  
President, City Council