



## City of Bronson 2022 Annual Report



## **The Bronson Creed**

I believe in Bronson and its responsibilities; and I shall do my part to make it a better place in which to live.

I believe in good government for Bronson, and I shall assume my share of the civic responsibility that rest on the shoulders of all our citizens.

I believe in supporting local enterprises that make for community development, and shall contribute my moral support and energy to any worthy cause championed by them.

I believe in patronizing home merchants, for they are greatly responsible for our having good schools and churches, better roads and promotion of the general welfare of this community.

I believe in making Bronson clean and attractive, for a healthy atmosphere is an inducement to honest and right-thinking citizens.

I believe in boosting my home town at every possible opportunity; that thinking, talking and acting progress is the quickest and surest way to bring permanent prosperity to Bronson - the best town in America -because it is MY HOME!

**From the Bronson Journal- 1924**

## **City of Bronson City Council Information:**

The City of Bronson has a Council-Manager form of government. The City Manager is charged with the day-to-day operation of the municipality and is appointed by and answers directly to the Council. The Council meets at the Bronson City Offices at 5:00 PM on the second Monday of every month. 2022 saw the return to in person meetings in the Council Chambers at City Hall following previous COVID-19 protocols.

The City of Bronson is governed by a five-person, elected City Council. Three seats on the Council are open every two years. Two seats are four-year terms and one is a two-year term. Following each election, the Council elects from its members a Mayor and Vice-Mayor.

**Mayor:** Matt Watkins (term expires November 2026)

**Vice-Mayor:** William Earl (term expires November 2026)

**Council:** William Rinehart (term expires November 2024)

Rick Johannes (term expires November 2024)

Larry McConn (term expires November 2024)

### **Bronson Area Fire Association Representatives:**

City Manager Mersman

Councilman Johannes

### **Bronson Community Foundation Representative:**

City Manager Mersman

Mayor Watkins

## **2023 City Council Meeting Schedule:**

### **2023 Meeting Dates:**

- January 9, 2023
- February 13, 2023
- March 13, 2023
- April 10, 2023
- May 8, 2023
- June 12, 2023
- July 10, 2023
- August 14, 2023
- September 11, 2023
- October 9, 2023
- November 13, 2023
- December 11, 2023

## **City Council Goals 2022-2023 (from FY2022-23 Budget)**

### **Goal: Business Retention and Attraction**

- Continue strategy of focusing on current employers and businesses and working with them to see expansion
- Continue to Implement benchmarks of the Redevelopment Ready Communities Program and engage related MEDC resources

### **Goal: Enhance and Undertake Bronson “Place-Making” Activities**

- Continue work to make Bronson more walkable and bikeable; including updating sidewalk ramps to ADA compliant.
- Develop the recently purchased former Northeastern Rail Line for non-motorized trail usage and update parks amenities with increased accessibility.
- Work towards evaluating and updating, as needed, City Zoning Ordinances, Master Plan, and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Continue working with and supporting the Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
- Continue working with community partners (DDA, Chamber of Commerce, Polish Festival, etc.) and businesses to expand and better market downtown activities:

August Memorial Park Concert Series  
City Wide Garage Sales/US 12 Sales  
Polish Festival  
Farmer’s Market  
Bronson Theater

Other new events

### **Goal: Infrastructure Improvements**

- Apply for infrastructure grants as they become available (MEDC Infrastructure Grants, MDOT, others)
- Work with EGLE towards addressing Inflow & Infiltration, including necessary sanitary sewer system improvements
- Work towards implementation of improvements outlined in the City's Capital Improvement Plan for 2020-2026
- Continue collaboration with Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study and Branch County Road Commission for street improvement targets and work
- Increase annual road preventative maintenance work using additional General Fund contributions
- Continue coordinated approach for infrastructure improvements

### **Goal: Optimize Organizational Efficiency**

- Consider energy-efficiency projects in coordination with Michigan Gas Utilities and Consumers Energy to improve facility efficiency
- Work with Consumers Energy on potential street-lighting improvements as programs become available
- Better plan for equipment purchases and uses across departments
- Continue public outreach efforts using the City's website, Facebook pages, and Instagram

## **City of Bronson 2022 Annual Report Introduction:**

This report provides a brief summary of City projects and accomplishments for the year 2022. As a community we have made significant progress in addressing infrastructure and equipment upgrades during the year. In 2022, the City adopted an updated the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to gather input and plan for future park updates. The newly updated plan will also keep the City eligible for Parks and Recreation grants from the State of Michigan to assist in paying for future improvements.

In 2022, the City awarded a contract for the repainting of the interior of the City's water tower. In order to complete the work, the water tower was taken out of service for roughly two months. During this time a temporary pressure tank was set up to regulate and maintain the needed pressure in the system for drinking water safety. While pressure fluctuated slightly, there were no issues. The work was completed in October of 2022. This is a major improvement to the system for drinking water safety and reliability.

The City Council also approved the purchase of phase II of the water meter replacement project. The City continued to work to install new water meters to every water customer in the City and will continue into 2023. As part of the City's Drinking Water Asset Management Grant (DWAM) the City was also able to perform pot holing of water services to verify the type of materials servicing the home. This will assist the City in completing the inventory report required by EGLE of potential lead service lines.

In 2022, the City Council approved an Administrative Consent Order with EGLE regarding the excessive Inflow and Infiltration in the City's sanitary sewer system. The City is in the process of developing a plan for how to address these issues and completing applications for loan and possible grants to help cover these improvements and repairs. This will be a major project currently estimated at roughly \$19-\$20 million dollars.

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Brandon Mersman", written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Brandon M. Mersman  
City Manager



## Highlights of 2022 Projects & Accomplishments:

### *Policy, Planning & Ordinances:*

*Rental Housing Ordinance Updates:* In October, the City Council approved amendments to the rental housing ordinance. The City Attorney, SAFEbuilt, and the City Manager worked together to come up with amendments to the rental housing ordinance to add clarity and address a few issues that came up earlier in the year. The ordinance allows the City to tax unpaid penalties, costs, fees, and fines to tax rolls and requires payment of all penalties or the certificate of occupancy can be revoked. One change also provides clarification that it is the homeowner or property managers responsibility to call and schedule a reinspection after paying the reinspection fee. The changes also exempt housing inspected by USDA/HUD, clarifies the process for correcting inspection violations, provides for the taxation of fees and penalties, and clarifies the definition of “owner.”

### *Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update:*

At the beginning of 2022, the City Council approved an updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The original plan was adopted in 2016 and was in need of updating in order to stay eligible for any of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants including; Trust Fund Grant, Passport Grant, and others. A community survey was conducted using an online survey which offered an opportunity for residents to provide input on what they would like to see in our City park system. Hardcopies were also made available to the public. The plan will serve as a guide for future decision-making regarding recreational facility improvements and programs over the next five years.

#### CITY OF BRONSON COMMUNITY PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

2022-2026



### ***Credit Card Payments:***

In March, the City went live with accepting credit card payments using Point & Pay payment solutions. Credit cards are now accepted at City Hall, online, and over the phone with IVR automated technology for utility payments. Users are also able to do auto pay through the online system. E-checks are also accepted. Usage started out slow but started to pick up by the end of 2022. Credit Cards are not accepted for tax payments as of January 2023.

#### **Now Accepting Credit Cards:**

3% Convenience Fee Applies

(\$2.00 Minimum Charge)



Online E-Check Fees: \$3.00 up to \$10,000

\$10.00 over \$10,000

### ***Zoning Board of Appeals Variances:***

The City Council also serves as the City's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA approved two variance requests in 2022:

***293 W. Railroad-*** The Zoning Board of Appeals approved two variances for 293 W. Railroad. The first was a variance from the front yard setback and the second was a variance from the lot depth requirement.

***Wayne Street-*** Council granted a minimum lot depth variance for a vacant lot on Wayne Street. This will allow a home to be built on the property to meet current zoning.

***Special Land Use Permit- Oak Drive Day Care:*** In December, the Planning Commission approved a special land use permit for 240 Oak Drive for an at home day care of 7 to 12 children. The Planning Commission stated that pickup and drop off times must be staggered as much as possible to limit the amount of traffic.

***Demolition of 214 W. Chicago Street & 422 Mill Street:*** City Council approved funds for the demolition of 214 E. Chicago Street which had a fire and had been abandoned next to the Post Office. This is now green space and is a big improvement to the neighborhood. The Council also approved the purchase and demolition of 422 Mill Street. The City purchased this property for future wastewater treatment plant expansions as the current plant is land locked. The home and out buildings on this property were also demolished.

### ***DPW Barn Siding:***

In June, Council approved a bid from Dan Hershberger Construction, who was the low bidder, to add insulation and metal siding over the existing cinder block walls for the Department of Public Works. The larger rear building is completed. The front small building will be completed in 2023. The project total is \$56,300 for insulation and siding. These buildings had not been painted in several years, phase I of the project is a very nice improvement.



***November City Council Election:*** The November City Council election saw the reelection of Matt Watkins and Rick Johannes. Bill Earl was also elected to a seat vacated by Joe Duke who did not run for another term. At the first meeting of the City Council following an election, a Mayor and Vice mayor is chosen by the City Council. Matt Watkins was elected to serve as Mayor after having previously served as Vice-Mayor. Bill Earl was elected to the role of Vice-Mayor. Matt Watkins and Bill Earl were the top two vote getters so they received 4-year terms to expire in 2026. Rick Johannes was elected to a 2-year term expiring in 2024.

***Employee Pension Plan- Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS):*** In 2022, the City received its 2021 MERS pension plan valuation. The plans funding ratio went from 73% funded at the end of 2020 to 80% funded at the end of 2021. In the spring of 2023, the City will receive the 2022 valuation. The City has made significant progress in increasing the funding ratio by making voluntary contributions in years prior. In June of 2022 the City Council



approved a voluntary contribution of \$50,000. Below is a table from the 2021 valuation that shows the funding ratio percentage by year:

**Table 7: Actuarial Accrued Liabilities - Comparative Schedule**

| Valuation Date<br>December 31 | Actuarial<br>Accrued Liability | Valuation Assets | Percent<br>Funded | Unfunded<br>(Overfunded)<br>Accrued<br>Liabilities |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--|
| 2007                          | \$ 378,679                     | \$ 279,034       | 74%               | \$ 99,645  |
| 2008                          | 413,492                        | 301,718          | 73%               | 111,774  |
| 2009                          | 424,998                        | 330,009          | 78%               | 94,989   |
| 2010                          | 1,454,330                      | 886,237          | 61%               | 568,093  |
| 2011                          | 1,579,361                      | 973,741          | 62%               | 605,620  |
| 2012                          | 1,665,666                      | 1,051,720        | 63%               | 613,946  |
| 2013                          | 1,768,256                      | 1,167,052        | 66%               | 601,204  |
| 2014                          | 1,917,762                      | 1,237,160        | 65%               | 680,602  |
| 2015                          | 2,161,142                      | 1,310,864        | 61%               | 850,278  |
| 2016                          | 2,296,215                      | 1,399,354        | 61%               | 896,861  |
| 2017                          | 2,399,836                      | 1,508,387        | 63%               | 891,449  |
| 2018                          | 2,521,583                      | 1,809,973        | 72%               | 711,610  |
| 2019                          | 2,677,653                      | 1,902,634        | 71%               | 775,019  |
| 2020                          | 2,843,354                      | 2,088,747        | 73%               | 754,607  |
| 2021                          | 3,054,758                      | 2,446,150        | 80%               | 608,608  |

Notes: Actuarial assumptions were revised for the 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019, 2020 and 2021 actuarial valuations.

### ***Police Department:***

*New Police vehicle-* In February, the City Council approved the purchase of a new Ford Explorer Police Interceptor. The City had been waiting for a vehicle that was ordered at the end of 2021 but had not been received yet. One became available at the local dealer and this vehicle met the departments needs so it was purchased and was available immediately. The vehicle was upfitted with the in-car camera and onboard laptop along with other necessary equipment. Equipment from the previous vehicle that was reusable was used where possible. The cost of the vehicle was \$43,325.40 and the cost of the upfitting was \$12,200.23.



*Deputy Police Chief-* Deputy Police Chief Brad McConn retired from the department after 28 years of service to the Department in November of 2022. The City is very grateful for his many years of dedicated service to the Department and its residents. Chief Johnson and the City Manager conducted interviews with four (4) candidates, all with experience with the Department. In October the City Council appointed Officer Frank Barker of the Branch County Sheriff's Department to take his place as Deputy Chief. Deputy Chief Barker will begin full time in this position in February of 2023 following his retirement from the Sheriffs Department. We are very excited to welcome him to the Department.

*Police Department Police Officers Association of Michigan (POAM) Contract Update (2022-2027)*

In 2022, the City's contract with the Police Officer's Association of Michigan was renewed for a period of five (5) years. There were some minor updates and the contract will cover only the full-time police officers (non-management). There will be a wage re-opener for years 3 through 5 coinciding with the adoption of the new budget. The contract will expire June 30, 2027.

*Police Department Generator:*

In 2021, the City received a grant from the City's insurance carriers (Michigan Township Participating Plan) risk control grant to connect the Police Department to the Fire Department's generator. This generator was able to handle the additional capacity. The cost for the electrical to connect to this generator was \$3,800 with the grant covering 50% or \$1,900. The work was completed in 2022 and will leave the Department better prepared for power outage events and will allow the Department to continue serving the public without interruption.

*See the Police Department 2022 Annual Report for More*

***Infrastructure (Water, Wastewater, Roads):***

*Road Maintenance/Improvements-* During the summer of 2022, the City worked with the Branch County Road Commission to perform preventative maintenance on City streets. The following roads had overlays along the edges (where needed) and had a chip and seal treatment:

- Schmid Farms (E. Grant, Walnut, Oak, and E. Corey)
- North Lincoln Street
- Matilda Street
- Wayne Street
- Albers Road.
- DPW parking lot

The total cost for the work on these roads and the DPW parking lot came in at \$102,809.73, well below the original estimate of \$121,394.50. The final cost is based on actual materials and labor used by the Road Commission. The City Council also approved City Hall parking lot improvements and seal coating of the Bronson City Cemetery. Due to equipment failure, the Road Commission was unable to complete this work in the summer of 2022 and will be a 2023 project.

*Administrative Consent Order (Sanitary Sewer System):*

In July of 2022, the City Council approved the Administrative Consent Order for the City to address the Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) in the sewer system that causes the City to discharge more than the permitted level of .5 million gallons per day. The City is working with the City's engineer to prepare a work plan and budget for the project. A rough estimate puts this project at around \$19 million to do all of the improvements in one phase. The City is working with the City's engineer to apply for USDA and Clean Water Revolving Loan (EGLE) funds for financing and possible grant funds. The City is hoping that its "significantly over burdened" status will provide significant grant funding towards this project. During the year, the City also chose Miller Canfield to serve as Bond Counsel and MFCI to serve as the City's financial advisor for this project.

In order to plan for the possible expansion of the City's wastewater treatment plant as part of this project, the City purchased land with a home and out buildings at 422 Mill Street. The buildings and home were demolished by the City during the summer. The land is currently being leased to a local farmer.

*Drinking Water Asset Management Grant (DWAM):* The City's engineer for the Drinking Water Asset Management Grant (DWAM) provided an update on activities during 2022 and upcoming work that will be done:

Asset Management Plan (AMP):

The primary purpose of this scope is to assist the community with updating the communities Water Asset Management Plan for their water system. This includes condition assessments of the distribution system thru modeling, developing a level of service, identify critical assets, and developing a 5-year and 20-year capital improvement plan with an updated rate study.

Status update is as follows:

- The computer model has been completed and a Water System Reliability Study has been prepared and submitted to EGLE. This modeling and report, identifies the level of service, and outlines the long- and short-term improvements to the City's water system.
- Current AMP plan and other previous reports/studies are being reviewed for updates and changes.
- Final report updates (Capital Improvement Plan, Rate Study, and AMP) are expected to be completed at the end of next year.

Distribution System Materials Inventory (DSMI):

The primary purpose of this scope is to assist the community with the complete inventory of their water system. This includes documenting each service line within the distribution system inventory including material type on both the public and private side of the line. It also requires the distribution system inventory to include materials in piping, storage structures, and wells. Status update is as follows:

- A random selection of water services has been hydro excavated (potholed) in accordance with EGLE's requirements.
- Interior house verification of water services and documentation for private side material is underway by DPW staff with the meter replacement program.
- Data is being reviewed for completeness and ability to project reasonable judgement regarding the material within the City's water services.
- A report of the activities and findings for the CDSMI is currently being prepared.
- Additional hydro excavating at the curb boxes to verify service line material at selected locations is expected to occur in Spring of 2023.
- Final report is expected to be completed at the end of the year.

In 2022, the City also submitted a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWRP) application in order to see what kind of grant funds the City could receive towards replacement of water lines that contain lead or lead components. The City hopes to hear back in early 2023.

*Water Meter Replacement:*

In April, the City Council approved the purchase of new water meters for Phase II of updating all of the water meters in the City. This was budgeted for over two budget years. The current



meters are at the end of their useful life with parts no longer available. As staff began operating the new meter reader, we had issues reading the old meters because the signal is too weak to read with the new hand-held reader. The Phase II cost was \$127,882.50 for the remaining meters. The City plans to purchase these meters using the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) local stimulus funds and water capital improvement funds. The City is working diligently to get this project completed in 2023.



### *Water Tower Improvement and Interior Painting Project:*

An inspection of the water tower found necessary safety improvements along with the need to perform another interior painting of the City's water tower. Bids were opened for this project on May 25<sup>th</sup> with the City receiving six (6) responses. L&T Painting was the low bidder at \$93,000 for the project work and \$20,000 for a portable pressure water tank. The City explored the use of the inactive water tower located at the corner of Matteson Street and Railroad Street to serve as a temporary water tower but it was found that it would not be feasible so a temporary portable pressure tank was used to keep the system pressurized. Nelson Tank Engineering served as the City's engineer for this project. Below is a summary of the bids received:

**Bid Tabulations  
City of Bronson  
200,000-Gallon Elevated Tank  
Interior Repainting and Minor Repairs**

| BIDDERS                       | Seven Bros.      | L&T Painting     | Maguire Iron     | E&L Contractors | Viking Industrial | Pittsburg Tank   |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| BID LINE ITEM                 |                  |                  |                  |                 |                   |                  |
| 1 Vent                        | \$6,800          | \$6,800          | \$6,500          | \$0             | \$9,500           | \$15,400         |
| 2 O/F Flap Gate               | \$3,700          | \$2,300          | \$1,500          | \$0             | \$4,000           | \$3,080          |
| 3 Hatch Gasket                | \$1,000          | \$400            | \$500            | \$0             | \$300             | \$440            |
| 4 Fall Prevention - Int.      | \$40,000         | \$5,400          | \$5,000          | \$0             | \$7,600           | \$2,420          |
| 5 Pit Welding (60 pit)        | \$6,540          | \$3,600          | \$2,400          | \$0             | \$3,900           | \$2,100          |
| 6 Diffuser/Tablets            | \$3,500          | \$3,400          | \$500            | \$0             | \$2,000           | \$3,300          |
| 7 Internal Ladder             | \$2,000          | \$1,200          | \$2,500          | \$0             | \$4,500           | \$3,300          |
| 8 Repaint Interior            | \$91,800         | \$69,900         | \$104,500        | \$0             | \$121,800         | \$128,350        |
| 9                             |                  |                  |                  |                 |                   |                  |
| <b>BASE BID TOTAL</b>         | <b>\$155,340</b> | <b>\$93,000</b>  | <b>\$123,400</b> | <b>\$0</b>      | <b>\$153,600</b>  | <b>\$158,390</b> |
|                               |                  |                  |                  |                 |                   |                  |
| Add Alternate - Pressure Tank | \$35,000         | \$20,000         | \$20,000         | \$0             | \$10,800          | \$12,180         |
|                               |                  |                  |                  |                 |                   |                  |
| <b>BASE BID+ADD ALT TOTAL</b> | <b>\$190,340</b> | <b>\$113,000</b> | <b>\$143,400</b> | <b>\$0</b>      | <b>\$164,400</b>  | <b>\$170,570</b> |
|                               |                  |                  |                  |                 |                   |                  |
| Addendum Acknowledged         | N                | N                | Y                | N               | Y                 | Y                |
| Bid Bond                      | Y                | Y                | Y                | N               | Y                 | Y                |
| Signed                        | Y                | Y                | Y                | N               | Y                 | Y                |

There was one change order in the project for the portable pressure tank. The total for the improvements came in at \$114,620.00 (L&T Painting) with the engineering coming in at \$14,750. The total for the project was \$129,370 and came out of the water capital improvement fund.

With the water tower down, the Fire Department went to work to find a way of getting water near the City limits to be able to truck it to the city with tankers if there was a fire while the water tower was down. They found a farmer near Parham and US-12 that was willing to let the Department hookup a connection that would allow them to fill water from their irrigation well. It was completed on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and the next day it was used for a fire on Parham Road in the Township. This will have uses in the future to help fight large City fires as well as fires in nearby townships.