

# Gratiot County Herald

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## Alma Receives Clean Bill of Financial Health

By Rosemary Horvath  
Herald Correspondent

Alma officials heaped praise upon the city's finance department for a positive audit report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.

Yeo & Yeo auditor Ali Barnes only had two minor control adjustments to cite at last week's Alma City Commission meeting, noting there had been 53 material weaknesses just two years ago.

A reorganized finance department headed by Curtis Dancer, an Alma College graduate, has put the situation on stable ground.

Barnes noted property taxes are "relatively stable," at slightly above \$2.5 million.

Total revenues DANCER for the general fund ended at \$5,029,875, which was \$403,000 under projection due to intergovernmental revenue and charges for services falling short.

After failing to make contributions to the public library two years before, the city contributed \$350,000.

The general fund balance at the start of the fiscal year was \$3,745,186, and ended at \$4,013,768.

Timing of capital projects such as newly constructed toilet shelters at a few city parks drew down revenue, as did a city commission decision to grant additional hazard pay to police and fire personnel that had not been budgeted.

Barnes also noted operating charges are covering costs and depreciation in the wastewater utility fund.

### A deteriorated Gratiot Avenue property

Walnut Street resident Steve Brown brought attention to a decaying property at 702 Gratiot Avenue, at the corner of Walnut and Gratiot, believed to have been vacant for more than 15 years.

His research show property taxes remain delinquent until paid "on the eve of tax foreclosure."

City code enforcement has attempted to contact the owner to no avail.

Taxable value of the Alma property is \$31,423.

Varmints and feral felines seem to be the only occupants which has drawn concern of neighbors.

Brown presented a letter with his and six other names requesting the city take action over several city ordinance violations.

Mayor Greg Mapes acknowledged the city has been aware of the situation. City Attorney Adam Flory acknowledged several options can be reviewed.

City Manager Aeris Ripley added the issue will be reviewed at the upcoming annual goal setting session, pointing out action would require expenses.

City commissioners voted unanimously to pursue a solution.

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Ithaca High School students (left to right) Jacob Mankey, Devyn Whitford and Landon Davis enjoyed a snow day from school at Woodland Park last Thursday.

## Snow Day! Students Take to Ithaca Sledding Hill

By William Meiners  
Herald Staff Writer

Three. That's how many days, up through last Wednesday, that the sun had shined over the middle of Michigan in 2023. Yet that gray, ongoing gloom got a wintery white interruption last week, with significant snowfall that forced consecutive cancellations at area schools.

For at least a few students, the snow days meant some quality time at the only sledding hill in Gratiot County.

Three of them, including Jacob Mankey, Devyn Whitford, and Landon Davis, all Ithaca High School students, headed out to

Woodland Park on Thursday afternoon.

With a variety of downhill rides, including a sled, disc, and snowboard, the trio first went about building a mini ramp to heighten the thrill.

They scooped shovels of snow into the plastic hull of blue and yellow, rope-pulled sleds, which they took back to the course. Soon enough, they had fashioned a bit of a speed-enhancing bump.

Between the two wooden walls, each took turns on some sliding instrument. Mankey first on a green, low-rider that made it through the ramp without any damage — to himself or newly built bump.

Davis sat atop a sled with a steering wheel, though he could have benefited from shock absorbers after his short run. Yet Whitford caught the most air on his green snowboard, maneuvering over the bump and steadying himself through an "s-shaped" sliding stop.

Relatively mild temperatures welcomed a few others seeking out the snow in the midafternoon hours. A mother helped her younger child slide down the tamer rolling hills of Woodland Park. For any others, a pleasant walkabout in the first sticking snows since Christmas, might have been just the ticket to cure any cabin fever.



## St. Louis Farmers

### Market Manager

## Prepares to Step Away

By Rosemary Horvath  
Herald Correspondent

A familiar springtime setting of farm produce, crafty items and other merchandise at booths dotting the downtown St. Louis parking lot outside the City Hall building will continue under a new manager.



BADER

Linda Bader, who helped found the successful market in 2016 and served as its manager is preparing to hand off responsibilities to a successor.

Applications for the year-round position are now being accepted by the Farmers Market Advisory Committee.

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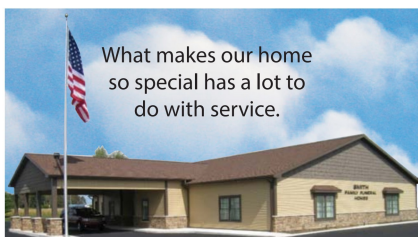
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