

**Open Line of Communication between the City of Buchanan and the Pokagon Band Regarding the Buchanan-St. Joseph River Master Planning Project**

October 30, 2023

Over the last several months, the City of Buchanan by and through Community Development Director Richard Murphy, and *A Vision for Buchanan* and Andrews University Professor Andrew von Maur have been in steady communication with the Pokagon Band Historic Preservation Officer, Matthew Bussler and Members of the Pokagon Band Tribal Council regarding the Buchanan-St. Joseph River Master Planning Project.

The City of Buchanan wishes to thank the Pokagon Tribe for having taken the time to correspond with us and for participating in various calls and virtual meetings, and for taking the time to visit the sites that are included in the scope of the project.

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office and Chairman of the Pokagon Band Land Use Board have expressed that they are opposed of the development at the proposed locations of the Buchanan-St. Joseph River Master Planning scope due to the guaranteed adverse effects to Tribal cultural and historical resources that would result from the work.

The City of Buchanan has responded that it deeply appreciates the open line of communication with the Pokagon Band. The City has heard and respects the desire of the Pokagon Band to have no development on these areas for the reasons they have expressed. The City balances our sincere respect for the Pokagon Band’s perspective with our duty to have this public access discussion with our citizens who have been using this land for several generations, but we do so only with full transparency.

The City’s approach on this project has always been to first be stewards of the land and then to discuss opportunities for walking trails and other soft footprint and minimally invasive improvements on already disturbed areas near our public access areas along the river. Our intent is to be very mindful of all viewpoints in the discussion while always being transparent so that the Band does not feel caught off guard at any time. We want to make it very clear that we invite the Pokagon Band to attend all future public discussions and to continue to express their feedback throughout our master planning process. Further, we continue to welcome opportunities to collaborate with the Band as part of the process to celebrate indigenous history and culture in these areas or other desires that Band may have. In doing so, our goal is to enhance and preserve the ecology, history and meaning of these areas while enhancing public access.

The City of Buchanan notified the Pokagon Band of the public workshop on the project that took place on October 24th 5:00 PM at Buchanan City Hall, 302 N. Redbud Trail. The City invited the Pokagon Band to attend that workshop and/or has invited the Pokagon Band to separately attend a meeting with our team that we can schedule to discuss our plans.

The City has communicated to the Pokagon Band that we intend to pursue all the proper archeological surveys at the appropriate time and abide by all relevant regulations, and that we continue to welcome their guidance on how to best move forward in these areas.

We look forward to more communication with the Pokagon Band as the project progresses.

All those who may be interested in the Buchanan- St. Joseph River Master Planning Project can track the project progress at this link:

<https://www.cityofbuchanan.com/comm-dev/page/buchanan-st-joseph-river-master-planning-project>

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| [A black and blue text on a black background  Description automatically generated](https://www.cityofbuchanan.com/comm-dev/page/buchanan-st-joseph-river-master-planning-project) | [Buchanan-St. Joseph River Master Planning Project](https://www.cityofbuchanan.com/comm-dev/page/buchanan-st-joseph-river-master-planning-project)  The proposed Riverfront Park project is a long-term vision for improving access for Buchanan residents to the St. Joseph river.  Riverfront Park is located at the boat launch off of N. Redbud Trail.  The “Master Plan” process has been funded through a grant from the AEP Foundation and is a necessary step to understand the community’s desires as well as to seek grants and funding to implement improvements to the park.  www.cityofbuchanan.com |