

## **Barone addresses health insurance confusion**

According to Alderman Ron Barone, representatives of Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield are not giving accurate information to retired city employees in regards to their health insurance coverage.

During the communications portion at the beginning of Tuesday's Common Council meeting, Barone, who chairs the council's insurance committee, addressed a number of retired city employees present at the meeting who had concerns about the city's switch to a Medicare Advantage insurance program. Some of those present said they had been told by representatives of Empire during informational meetings that there would be additional costs to them under the new agreement.

The Common Council passed a resolution on August 18 authorizing Mayor Ann Thane to enter into a new agreement with Empire. Prior to that in May, Kevin Garvin of the Garvin Group, the city's insurance broker, said the city could realize a savings of approximately \$100,000 annually by switching to the federally subsidized program without raising co-pays or decreasing coverage.

According to Barone, the information being told to retirees by representatives of Empire at the meetings was incorrect.

"They gave bad information," said Barone. "I guarantee you that nothing is going to change, your co-pays aren't going to go up."

Barone pointed out that each retiree has a contract with the city that specified their insurance benefits.

"We have to follow those contracts," said Barone.

Barone said he hoped to have a meeting with the Garvin group either this week or next in order to get more information about the transition and promised to set up additional meetings with retirees to answer questions.

"We will have all the answers for you, I assure you," said Barone.