

Memorandum

DATE: February 5, 2010
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of February 5, 2010

Attached to this week's Friday Memo are the monthly Board & Commission updates for January 2010. As mentioned at the Council Strategic Planning Session, this communication tool will continue to be used as the Council believed to be an effective tool for providing information between the Boards and Commission and the City Council. Those contributing please note your efforts are appreciated. Next month's report is scheduled to be included with the March 5, 2010 Friday Memo.

In August of 2008 Waste Management, Rice County, and the City of Northfield implemented the Single Sort Recycling Program for residential waste collection. Attached to the memo today is the data on the tons of waste deposited and landfill charges for residential waste collection since January 2008. Although not significant, there has been a slight decrease in the total amount of waste collected from homes in Northfield and deposited at the Rice County Landfill since the implementation of the Single Sort Program. This information along with the associated cost savings was used in calculating the 2010 Garbage Fund Budget and the staff recommendation of no increase for the 2010 Residential Rate schedule.

Can we do better? The Environmental Quality Commission has identified recycling and the reduction of residential waste as one of the efforts they will be working on this year. The correlation between residential waste costs and a reduction in waste tonnage deposited at the landfill is direct. Besides providing good environmental stewardship, recycling efforts can affect your monthly residential fee. Those reducing their residential waste can opt for a smaller container and reduce their monthly household fees. The 2010 residential schedule of fees are:

Cart Size (gal)	Monthly Fee
14	\$8.10
35	\$10.30
64	\$14.70
96	\$19.40
"Drive By"	\$7.21

Still interested? If you want to try your hand at being a City Manager and managing recycling and waste for a city an interesting web site called Recycle City has been developed by the EPA.

<http://www.epa.gov/recyclecity/gameint.htm>

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of February 1-5 2010:

CITY CLERK

Submitted by Deb Little, City Clerk

Inquiries have been received about the process for obtaining data from the City of Northfield. Explanation of the two specific areas of inquiry is noted below for your information.

- Check out of meeting recordings:

In addition to recording City Council meetings to be broadcast on the local cable channel NTV, video streaming of meetings provided by KYMN, the City also provides a copy of recordings of City meetings that can be checked out free of charge. Recordings of City meetings can be checked out for 48 hrs at no cost. If the requestor would like to renew the recording for an additional 48 hrs, they can call and check if there has been another request for the recording. If there has been another request, the DVD needs to be returned. If not, the requestor may keep the recording for an additional 48 hrs. Requestors are asked to complete a video request form (copy attached.) Staff uses the form to keep track of the recordings, similar to borrowing items from the Library. If a copy of the requested recording is already made, the requestor is given the recording immediately. If staff has to make a copy of the original recording, the requestor is notified as soon as the copy is available. Typically recordings are available within 24 hours of the request.

- Requests for data:

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act governs requests for data. The City does ask that all data requests be made in writing. The requestor is asked to complete the City of Northfield Data Request Form (copy attached). The form is used for the sole purpose of facilitating access to data so that staff has documentation of what is being requested, a contact point in the event additional clarifications are needed, there is no question about whether a request was made, as well as to notify the requestor when the data is ready. Persons are not required to identify themselves, or state a reason for, or justify a request for public data. Staff has had requestors that have chosen not to identify themselves and only complete the description of information requested, as well as requests that are received via e-mail or written on a blank sheet of paper. The remaining sections of the form are for staff use to track such things as when the request was completed, how the data is classified, remarks or basis for denial including the applicable statute section used for denial, number of pages provided, copying charges, etc. Data is provided as soon as reasonably possible. Some requests are quite complex and requiring research, review of the data to ensure that only public data is being distributed, and copying.

Staff has responded to over 350 requests for data since March 2007, providing 18,887 pages of information to-date. This does not include the recent court ordered discovery of data, which included approximately 55 hours of staff time and approximately 4,200 copies provided.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Building

Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Official

This week we have been busy with the rental program. The activities include completing rental inspections from District 1 and organizing District 2. We have also been investigating properties that may be rentals and are not licensed.

Last week we had the Contractors Seminar at the Northfield Ballroom. We had about 118 contractors for the event. Judging from the comments on the course evaluation forms that were returned, the seminar was a huge success.

St Olaf is working hard on the New Main project. Footings and concrete piers are in place for the steel supports needed to create the 3 story open space in the middle of the existing building. It sounds like the completion is scheduled for September of 2010.

The KFC project still looks on track for a mid February opening.

The Jasnoch Apartments have a Temporary Occupancy Permit. There are a few things left to finish up before they get their final CO but they can start to rent out apartments to the new building called "Mosaic". They have 4 rented of the 45 units with occupancy in the next few weeks.

A few smaller commercial and residential projects have come into the office, including a new single-family home, and others in process are the Northwood Pines project at the Northfield Retirement Center, CSMR and Perkins Transport.

Housing

Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager

Staff and the HRA chairperson attended a Homeowners Association (HOA) meeting for the Elianna townhomes this week. The units are slowly being purchased and occupied; people who have been living in the units for a while are excited to see the units filling up and interest in participating in the HOA. The revitalization of this neighborhood is exciting.

Staff is processing two more first time homebuyer applications. Renewed interest in the program is evident after the homebuyer credit program was extended, and also as people are getting their tax refunds from 2009 to use as downpayment dollars. We are nearly out of funds for this program but funds remain in the rehab programs, and staff will be strongly marketing those programs throughout 2010.

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Planning Commission met Thursday night to continue their review of the draft Land Development Code (LDC). The Commission reviewed standards for neighborhood compatibility in existing residential neighborhoods. This text language would regulate infill and redevelopment within these neighborhoods to prevent homes being built that are of a significantly different height and massing than other homes in the neighborhood. Next Thursday, the Commission will continue its review of the LDC

Engineering

Stormwater Ordinance

Submitted by Katy Gehler, City Engineer

Interviews were conducted on Friday, January 29, 2010, with the three firms that submitted proposals for the project. The selection committee did come to a consensus on the firm offering the best value of service. The committee included:

Paul Jackson, St. Olaf Environmental Studies and Chemistry
John Schade, St. Olaf Environmental Studies and Biology
Beth Kallestad, CRWP
Joel Walinski, City Administrator
Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director
Brian Welch, GIS Technician
Katy Gehler, City Engineer

Staff will facilitate a discussion with Bridgewater Township regarding cooperative efforts within the project and also discuss the overall project process with the council at the work session on February 9, 2010.

4th Street Reconstruction

Submitted by Katy Gehler, City Engineer

Work continued this week on creation of the plans for the 4th Street project. Staff has been working diligently to complete the design documents while addressing issues related to a significant software upgrade.

On January 21, 2010, concepts for the streetscape elements were presented to the Streetscape Task Force. The concepts presented were revisions to the elements used on 5th Street that work within the physical limitations of the 4th Street corridor. The Task Force provided valuable direction to design staff to allow forward progress on street design. Direction was also provided as to the overall look of planters desired. Staff will be refining the options for the Task Force to weigh in on prior to selection of these elements that will ultimately be approved by the council with the final plan set.

Staff met with Carleton College on January 15, 2010 to allow them to provide an update to the City on the progress with the Arts Center and allow the City the opportunity to coordinate work related to the 4th Street project. A layout of Union Street, addressing additional parking along the west side of the Arts Center was discussed. Carleton indicated acceptance of the concept and a willingness to work cooperatively to make the concept successful. The cooperative parking concept allows parking limited to Carleton during weekday business hours with public parking during all other hours. It is anticipated that the council will be asked to pass a resolution establishing the limited parking as part of the project process.

FINANCE

Submitted by Kathleen MacBride, Director

Bond Counsel change: The City has received notice from Mary Dyrseth, City Bond Counsel, that she has left Briggs & Morgan and joined the Kennedy & Graven firm. We have also received invitations from both Briggs & Morgan and Kenney & Graven to continue to use their firms for bond-related legal services. While the City doesn't spend a lot of money on bond counsel, about \$5,000 for a standard general obligation bond issue; this change is best addressed at this time by doing an RFP process. There are only a handful of law firms that offer this specialty and the process can be done relatively quickly.

Municipal Fiscal-Health Contingency Planning – enclosed is an article from the California League of Cities on this topic. Although there are differences in between the two states in local government revenue streams, the influence of the general economy and the state government's fiscal health is similar. The article, written by the City of San Luis Obispo's Finance and Information Technology Director, details the contingency planning his city has put in place. Some of the pieces of their plan, we have already addressed, such as developing a policy for General Fund reserves. Other components offer opportunities for us to consider implementing here.

LIBRARY

Submitted by Lynne Young, Director

The first Carnegie Centennial Concert was held on Saturday night before a packed house of almost 100 people. Gao Hong and the Carleton Chinese Music Ensemble provided a spellbinding performance. The performances are made possible through a grant from the Northfield Area Foundation. Special thanks to the Friends, Board members and staff who helped to set up and take down the event. The next concert is coming up soon – February 13, 7:00 p.m., at the Library (upstairs) – Lars Skjervheim Spelemannslag of St. Olaf College Hardanger Fiddle Ensemble with Andrea Een.

The Friends of the Library met on Tuesday and finalized plans for their annual meeting to be held at 7:00 p.m. on March 9 at the library. The speaker for the annual meeting will be author Cary Johns Griffith who is a finalist in the Minnesota Book Awards this year. He will be talking about his new book *Opening Goliath: Danger and Discovery in Caving*. The book is a tense narrative about fascination and dangers of exploring caves in MN.

The Friends used a Catholic Charities grant received in 2008 to purchase new technology for the library including a large flat screen TV and stand to be used as a computer display screen for meetings and for various children's programs.

Kathy Ness was awarded an all-expenses-paid grant to attend the "Picturing America in Our Nation's Libraries Conference" in New York City this March. The grant was awarded to 70 librarians across the United States based on programming they created with Picturing America art work. The posters that the library received from the Picturing America grant were used in last year's summer reading program and are now available for check-out from the library.

Kathy Rush received a grant from SELCO to attend a library technology conference at Macalester College in March.

A number of faulty valves were replaced in the library's heating system. Heating should now be more evenly distributed throughout the building.

Reference staff members have been weeding the print reference and employment collection, updating core materials, and looking at online resources. A number of print reference materials that were out of date or infrequently used have been removed to make room for another shift of materials.

Joan Ennis and Leesa Wisdorf both participated in initial judging of books nominated for a Minnesota Book Award. Judging requires thoughtful, discriminating reading of a large number of books, which they do in their spare time. The 2009 Minnesota Book Awards ceremony will be held on April 17, 2010 at the Crowne Plaza Riverfront in St. Paul.

PUBLIC WORKS

Water

Submitted by Doug Lien Water Division Manager

Water Systems Technician Jay Hall was performing the morning rounds when he discovered that none of the chemical pumps were operating at Well #2. He found a circuit breaker that was tripped and a fuse that was blown for the chemical pumps. When he put the pumps back in operation the circuit breaker tripped again, which lead Jay to the main cause of the problem. The chlorine booster pump motor was burned out and was not repairable. A new booster pump has been ordered and arrived today (2/5). The pump has been installed and Well #2 is now back in service.

The Water Division staff has changed out 338 water meters in 2010.

Waste Water

Submitted by Gerald Ness, Systems Technician

In a team effort the Wastewater Treatment Facility staff completed troubleshooting and repairs to the pneumatic actuator system utilized in the air drain system of Cell 10 Biological Aerated Filter. Sequential control anomalies, air circuit variations, component regulation, and calibration were successfully assessed and in turn, the data acquired was utilized to adjust and optimize module performance relative to the overall system design parameters.

cc: Department Managers