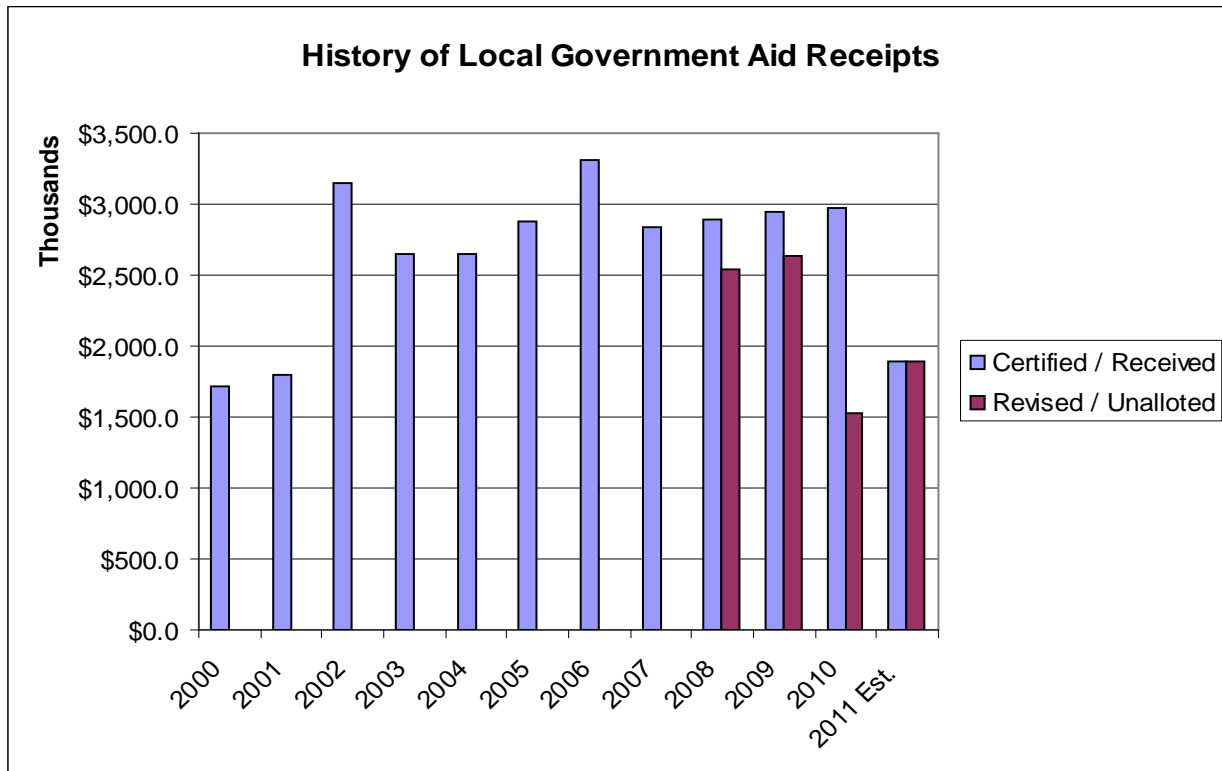


**Memorandum**

DATE: February 19, 2010  
TO: Mayor & Council Members  
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator  
RE: Friday Memo for the week of February 15-19, 2010

On Monday the Governor announced additional reductions to Local Government Aid (LGA) payments to Northfield and other communities. In response, I have asked all city departments to begin the development of a list of proposed cost saving initiatives and expenditure reductions for 8 – 10% of their operating budgets. These will be presented for council review at an upcoming council meeting. Below is a chart providing information on the reduction of LGA funding over the last several years:



Given what is anticipated for 2010 and 2011, the reductions in expenditures for 2010 and 2011 will need to be sustainable over time and will have implications on the service delivery to residents and businesses. The Finance Department has provided more information below on the levy limit requested by the Governor.

On Tuesday the Bridgewater Township Board of Supervisors passed a motion inviting the cities of Northfield and Dundas and Rice County to work cooperatively to pursue a joint agreement to upgrade Decker Avenue

and 100<sup>th</sup> Street and improve the intersection at Decker Avenue and Hwy 19 to support urban growth and development. Additionally the Township Board requested the City of Northfield to work in partnership with the township in exploring ways of preserving the Rice Creek Township. Both motions are attachments to this memo. These items will be on future council agendas for further discussion.

Council Member Zweifel has confirmed her Ward meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward on Monday, March 1, 2010 at 7:30 PM in the Valhalla room in Buntrock Commons on the St Olaf campus. The topic of this ward meeting will be land use. The Third Ward is the Northwest area of town, including St Olaf College, Northfield Retirement Center, residential neighborhoods surrounding Greenvale School and Liberty Park neighborhood. As always ward meetings are open to everyone.

**Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of February 15-19, 2010:**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Community Development**

*Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director*

City staff, in conjunction with the City Attorney, will be preparing a series of options for the City Council to consider related to the issues of the annexation agreement between the City and Waterford Township. These options will be presented at the City Council meeting of March 2, 2010.

Effort is underway to explore various strategies within the Community Development Department that will reduce operational expenses or generate revenue. This is occurring in response to the anticipated shortfall in state government aid in support of general local government operations. Any of these strategies will likely involve a reduction in service from the Department.

The progress that is underway with the Master Plan for the business and industrial park will be shared with the property owners west of the Northfield Municipal Hospital. An overview of the concepts from the Master Planning effort will also be presented to the Greenvale Town Board in the near future.

**Economic Development**

*Submitted by Jody T. Gunderson, Economic Development Director*

The Business Park Master Plan Steering committee met on Thursday to review the draft market analysis produced by Design Workshop and review the refined concept drawings that were developed during the two-day public design charrette. The consultant design team was able to begin refining the concept plans utilizing the preliminary information compiled in the market analysis. Three distinct concepts have currently been developed: an Agro-Eco Concept Plan, a Village Center Concept Plan, and a Campus Concept Plan. While the Committee is still in the early stages of reviewing the merits of each concept plan, it is reasonable to assume that elements of each plan will eventually be integrated into the final master plan for the properties.

**Housing**

*Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager*

Staff has been busy this week showcasing the townhomes for rent on Elianna Drive. Interest is high and several applications have come in; staff hopes to have them rented and occupied by the first part of March.

Due to the budget forecast provided by the Governor's Office, staff has been reviewing the 2010 HRA budget for reductions and opportunities to assist with the general budget in terms of either expenses or staff assistance.

## **Planning**

*Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner*

The Planning Commission met on Thursday to continue its review of the draft Land Development Code (LDC). The Commission is reviewing regulations for existing residential development in the city, including compatibility standards for new construction and building expansions. The Commission reviewed Staff research on existing residential building area and floor area ratios. The purpose of this discussion was to determine if additional lot coverage regulations are needed to prohibit homes from becoming too large for the surrounding neighborhood.

The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) also met on Thursday to review proposed large planters on 4th Street in Downtown as part of the reconstruction of that street this summer. The HPC provided input that smaller planters and flower baskets should be part of the reconstruction rather than the large planters, which are out of character with the historic downtown.

## **ENGINEERING**

### **Stormwater Ordinance**

*Submitted by Katy Gehler, City Engineer*

As indicated at the council meeting on Tuesday, staff has been working to create an email list server that interested citizens can subscribe to receive updates throughout the ordinance drafting process. The list server is up and running and accessible through the project webpage.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Street Reconstruction**

*Submitted by Katy Gehler, City Engineer*

Planter options were presented to the Streetscape Task Force at the meeting on Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010. The Task Force selected a preferred style that is in line with the look of the planters already in Bridge Square (See website for Option A). The planters will be used in conjunction with bump-out type areas created by pavers that delineate the look of a bump-out while being flush to the pavement surface. The grouping of planters in the bump-out areas will be completed through the use of three planters. Smaller planters will be used along the street curb line. This plan to bring vegetative elements in the design was in lieu of the elements used on the 5<sup>th</sup> Street block due to physical constraints. The constraints along the block of 4<sup>th</sup> Street from Division to Washington include shallow bedrock (~4 ft. depth), narrow sidewalks (8.5-9.5 feet), ADA standards (5' min. walkable space) and no parking loss. The concepts of the proposed streetscape and the planter options are posted on the project website.

The planter options were also presented to the HPC at the Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting. After discussion the HPC ultimately voted against the bump-outs and planter clusters, but for the use of the smaller planters along the curb line.

Reasons HPC gave for the opposition;

- The reason for the opposition were the following:
- The large scale planters have no historical precedence
- They are over sized for such a location
- And pose potential traffic hazards.
- They would only appear in this block of the downtown.
- The annual relocation of the planters would give an awkward appearance each winter and would likely damage it's topsoil each spring.

On Mar. 2 staff will be seeking direction from the council on how to proceed with the design in light of the decision of the HPC and the recommendation of the Streetscape Task Force.

## FINANCE

*Submitted by Kathleen McBride, Director*

*Capital Improvement Bonds – Reverse Referendum:* What are the rules? Attached is a letter written by Steve Bubul, Kennedy & Graven, to the Inver Grove Heights City Administrator last year as that City initiated its City Hall expansion project. The letter addresses some of the questions that have come up here with regards to the reverse referendum process. Also included are the Minnesota Rules that are cited in the letter.

### Survey - Percent of debt vs. total 2010 levy

	2010 TOTAL LEVY	2010 DEBT LEVY	% of Debt to Total
<b>Brainerd</b>	\$4,112,308	\$1,181,717	28.74%
<b>Albert Lea-no response</b>			
<b>Bemidji</b>	\$3,687,384	\$967,887	26.25%
<b>Cloquet</b>	\$2,550,000	\$295,000	11.57%
<b>Elk River</b>	\$11,112,391	\$919,261	8.27%
<b>Fergus Falls</b>	\$4,084,741	\$531,717	13.02%
<b>Hibbing</b>	\$5,510,569	\$1,000,903	18.16%
<b>Hutchinson</b>	\$6,183,482	\$1,791,182	28.97%
<b>New Ulm</b>	\$5,266,154	\$1,742,807	33.09%
<b>Northfield</b>	\$6,304,824	\$1,023,598	16.24%
<b>North Mankato</b>	\$4,814,154	\$1,463,987	30.41%
<b>Marshall</b>	\$4,666,667	\$1,106,302	23.71%
<b>Red Wing</b>	\$12,660,124	\$0	0.00%
<b>Willmar</b>	\$3,668,705	\$0	0.00%
<b>Baxter</b>	\$5,650,000	\$1,187,000	21.01%
<b>Crow Wing County</b>	\$36,221,626	\$5,943,990	16.41%

City of Brainerd – debt % survey results: *We responded to a request for information about the percentage of our 2010 levy is for bonded debt. The results of the survey are shown below:*

*The City's 2010 Property Tax Levy vs. the Levy Limit:* Governor Pawlenty has submitted a supplemental budget proposal that includes additional state aid cuts – beyond Monday's announcement. The supplement proposal also includes permanent levy limits. For 2010, what's the status of the adopted property tax levy compared to the levy limit?

The portion of the City's levy that is subject to the limit totals \$5,259,939 (General Fund, Park Fund and the Vehicle & Equipment Replacement Fund). This is \$171,660 below the levy limit of \$5,431,599. It is also important to note that we did not take advantage of those special levies that would have allowed us to levy for the December 2008 unallotment of \$355,263 and the 2009 unallotment of \$302,088. The City also reduced five bonded debt levies that resulted in another reduction of another \$140,887. The final levy detail with the potential additions is detailed below. The total reductions and the unused levy limit and special levies total \$969,898.

	2010
General Fund	4,924,864
Park Fund	25,000
Transportation Fund	-
City Facilities Fund	-
Equipment & Vehicles Fund	310,075
Levy components subject to the levy limit	5,259,939
Tax Abatement (for HRA)	21,287
Bonded Debt Levies	1,023,598
<b>Final Adopted Levy total</b>	<b>6,304,824</b>
<b>Unused levy limit</b>	<b>171,660</b>
Special Levy for 2008 unallotment	355,263
Special Levy for 2009 unallotment	302,088
Bonded Debt levy reductions	140,887
	969,898

## LIBRARY

*Submitted by Lynne Young, Director*

It has been an exciting week for library staff as we learned that we have received several grants for which we have applied. SELCO, the regional library system of which the Northfield Public Library is a member, has awarded us a \$3,000 grant for our community anniversaries celebrations. The Arts Guild is celebrating 50 years of arts programming and activities in our community, and the library is celebrating the centennial of the Carnegie building. We are planning a joint birthday party on April 25 from 2-4, downtown. The grant will cover costs for speakers and other activities for the party. In addition, the grant will help cover costs of the exhibit and DVD that we are working on in collaboration with the Northfield Historical Society. Several different St. Olaf students will be doing the research and production work for the exhibit and DVD. The exhibit will open on April 22; the DVD premier is scheduled for May 6 at the Viking Auditorium at St. Olaf College.

Kathy Ness also learned that the Library and the Community Services Division of Northfield Public Schools have been awarded a grant of \$5,000 for the Books & Stars program this summer. Kathy is busy lining up the acts. It should be a great program this year.

Kathy Ness received a Healthy Community Initiative Making a Difference Award for Jan/Feb 2010 award. This is recognition of the many contributions Kathy has made to the youth of this community, especially her recent work with the Library's Teen Advisory Board.

Speaking of the Teen Advisory Board, the members have been busily assembling mini-golf holes. This coming Sunday, February 21, join them for a round of mini-golf in the library. The event will run from 1-3.

February's Carnegie Centennial Concert featuring Andrea Een and the Lars Skjervheim Spelemannslag of St. Olaf College delighted an audience of more than 40. The Centennial Concert Series is made possible by a grant from the Northfield Area Foundation. The next concert in the series will be held on March 13.

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

### **Facilities**

*Submitted by Bernie Shakal Facilities Maintenance Supervisor*

Bernie had a meeting with a commercial boiler service company this week to determine why some of the heaters in the City Hall building are making loud sounds. The cause was determined to be parts in the heaters that are worn due to age. We are in the process of obtaining repair costs, and hope to get the system repaired soon.

Progress is being made with the Johnson Controls heating system at the NCRC building. More fine tuning has been done and temperatures are becoming more stable. A service company has been hired to do some re-work on the boilers at the NCRC, this is necessary because of errors made by the company that installed the boilers.

### **Streets and Parks**

*Submitted by TJ Heinrich, Streets and Parks Supervisor*

Staff dealt with snow issues on President's Day. Streets were plowed and cul-de-sacs had a pass through them. The downtown snow was not removed due to the small amount that fell. United States flags were taken down on Tuesday. Staff continues to turn and move the compost rows at the City compost facility. Turning the rows speeds up the composting process. Mowing of certain City retention has been completed. Street corners and catch basins were also plowed out this week. Park ice rinks were maintained this week.

### **Water**

*Submitted by Doug Lien Water Division Manager*

The Water Division has replaced 611 meters since the first of January.

Water Operators Scott Murphy and Lenny Moore shoveled the snow off of the roofs at the Water Division on Monday. Ice jams started to form because of the deep snow on the roofs.

Water Systems Technician Jay Hall contacted Modern Printers to get a price on stuffing 2,000 envelopes with letters to residents on the new Radio Read meter project. Having On Target prepare the letters for the Water Division will save a lot of staff time on this simple but time consuming task.

### **Wastewater**

*Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent*

This week the system integrators that provided hardware, software, and installation services for the upgrade of the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System at the wastewater treatment facility, were on site fixing some relatively minor problems with the system. The upgrade was installed and has been fully operational for about 3 months, and in that time wastewater staff had identified three system functions that were not working quite right. To date the new SCADA system has proved itself to be faster, much more trouble free, and more user friendly than the outdated system it replaced.

cc: Department Managers