

**Memorandum**

DATE: March 5, 2010  
TO: Mayor & Council Members  
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator  
RE: Board And Commission Memo February 2010

Thank you to the Board and Commissions that have submitted information as a follow-up to their Board and Commission actions and meetings in February 2010. Information for the February memo will be due by April 5, 2010 and posted on Friday April 9, 2010. Please note: some submittals are edited.

**Below is information from Board and Commission Chairs on Northfield board and commission items of interest:**

**Heritage Preservation Commission**

*Submitted by Commissioner Mary Titus*

- The majority of this evening’s meeting was taken up with discussion of a planters/pavement design proposed for 4<sup>th</sup> Street E between Washington and Division by the Northfield downtown streetscape task force. Because this block is within the Historic District, HPC approval is necessary for significant streetscape changes. The City Engineer presented to HPC drawings of the street, identifying the location of the proposed planters and the brick paving inlays that would create visual bump-outs on which the planters could be placed during warmer months. These planters would be very large, sufficient to hold a small tree with ornamental under planting. They would provide an alternative to actual trees, which have not fared well on this block because of bedrock and shading. The City Engineer also provided images of possible planters in varying sizes and styles. She also reported the suggestion that each year, before winter when street plowing occurs, the planters could be moved by forklift to Bridge Square.

After extensive discussion, the HPC unanimously voted against this streetscape proposal. Foremost among reasons for this opposition were the following: such large scale planters have no historical precedents; they are oversized for such a location, and pose potential traffic hazards; they would appear only in this block of the downtown, and hence are more anomalous than integral to streetscape design; their annual relocation to Bridge Square would give the Square an awkward appearance each winter and would likely damage its topsoil each spring. Although HPC opposed this particular proposal for the downtown historic district streetscape, members of the commission repeatedly expressed their support for smaller planters, and for the presence of flowers and greenery throughout the downtown.

- The HPC also discussed and then proposed paint colors for window trim and plywood inserts on the upper windows at 508 Division Street South. The

Commission as a whole regretted that the owners of this building are unable at present to put in correctly sized, historically accurate, and more attractive windows to replace the small modern windows and plywood sheets that currently fill the large arched openings on this historic building.

### **Human Rights Commission**

*Submitted by Bonnie Praver, Human Rights Vice Chair*

- The Human Rights Commissioners (HRC) were informed that Rice County Mediation is hoping to work with the three parties involved in concerns by tenants of Viking Terrace over cars being towed with the towing targeting Latino tenants. As of the HRC last meeting they had not met with the groups but it was supposed to happen soon. This issue was first brought to the HRC attention last summer. Bill Olsen is our contact with the mediation organization.
- The condition of sidewalk and corners of streets and curbs was again discussed. The island in the intersection of Highways 19 and 3 was a major concern by one of our commissioners. It had not been cleared which made it very difficult for walkers to get through the intersection and he noted that scooters and other devices to help physically challenged citizens get around cannot navigate these streets to get to businesses like Kwik Trip. Another commissioner talked of the snow being so high on the curbs that when using a handicapped parking space one is still not able to get to the sidewalk easily from the car. This was noted near Community Resource Bank. It was suggested that a map highlighting these and other concerns be brought to the city council. Everyone felt the sidewalks were looking much better and were easy to use.
- The HRC discussed the Martin Luther King celebration. The donations were much less than in past years and we were able to pay our expenses by using money carried over from last year. The program was good but attendance was small even though the weather was good.
- The HRC heard about all the meetings already held in different locations by the Census 2010 Marketing committee, some being ESL teachers, Head Start parents, Healthy Community Initiative board, and client services staff at the CAC. Many more meetings are scheduled for the next month. There are plans to put information in children's back packs at school and have a table staffed at conferences at Greenvale, information sent out in the March water bills, and information on the internet sites and newspapers, other schools, and Thursday's Table.
- The HRC reviewed the applications of two people for our commission and discussed their backgrounds and thought both would be good additions to our commission and are recommending them to the mayor for appointment. We started to discuss current and long term commission goals and realized we would have much more time to devote to this important task once our census obligations were fulfilled.

### **Library Board**

*Submitted by Margit Johnson, Chair*

#### **Fundraising Feasibility Study**

Library Strategies consultants are working with a local writing team to develop a case statement that tells our story to potential significant donors. The timetable for the study challenges the Library Board and the City Council to coordinate our information before the Council makes a decision to funding 2011-2014 CIP projects. Library Strategies will interview potential donors in early May and then collate and prepare their findings in time for our June 9, 2010 board meeting. If the consultants learn that there may be significant private funds available for the library expansion, the Council will want to know that before making a bond levy decision.

- **Carnegie Centennial Celebration**

We are telling our story! Check the library's Centennial Blog at <http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/library> to see videos and photos of the January and February concerts, attended by about 160 people of all ages. The blog also features interviews with a wide range of library users and what they like best about the public library. March promises to be busy with the Friends of the Library annual meeting with author Cary Griffith March 9, a jazz duo on March 13 as the monthly Carnegie Centennial Concert, and Northfield author Siri Hustvedt reading from her work on March 26. The centennial calendar can be found under "What's New" on the library's website. We are pleased to have funding for all of our centennial events and activities throughout 2010 from the Northfield Area Foundation, Friends of the Library, and SELCO's Legacy funds.

- **Library usage**

Even though the library remains closed on Sundays and the bookmobile is parked for the foreseeable future, hourly circulation continues to exceed previous years – 122 items per hour this January compared to 114 items in January 2009. If you stop by the library at any time day or evening, you will see most if not all the computers in use, people using their own laptops to access the library's high speed internet, children and parents in the children's room and the DVD collection, and library staff answering questions and helping patrons find books, databases, and periodicals to meet their needs. The public library personifies the City's mission statement: *Striving for Excellence, Committed to Service.*

### **Mayor's Task Force on Youth Alcohol & Drug Use**

*Submitted by Joan Janusz and Susan Sanderson, Co-Chairs*

#### **Updates on February Activities:**

- Following the WCCO News segment on the program, Northfield has received numerous requests from other communities to learn more about the "Take It to The Box" medication disposal program. The Mayor's Task Force plans to work with the Northfield and Faribault Police Departments to host a forum in April where other communities can come and see the disposal box and learn about the details of the program for potential replication.
- The Mayor's Task Force and City of Northfield received more than \$27,000 in in-kind contributions during 2009. This included both donated financial resources, as well as contributions of services. It speaks to the level of generosity in the community and to partners' ongoing commitment to these issues.
- The Mayor's Task Force continues to partner with the Northfield Middle School on a Positive Community Norms campaign at the middle school during this school year. Neuger Communications Group is again donating their services to help lead this campaign, which was piloted last year at the Northfield High School. The campaign stresses the healthy decisions made by most Northfield students, including the decisions not to use alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs.
- Considerable time was spent in February working in subcommittees to develop 2010 action work plans for the numerous initiatives. These will be discussed and finalized at the March Mayor's Task Force meeting. As noted last month, the chief initiatives that the Mayor's Task Force plans to undertake this year include:
  - ⇒ Continue to coordinate the "Take It to The Box" medication disposal program, in collaboration with the Northfield Police Department and other partners

- ⇒ Continue ongoing communication with the community (via monthly newspaper articles, monthly radio shows, etc.) about the Mayor's Task Force, youth substance use, prevention efforts, and available resources
- ⇒ Expand parent education efforts around substance use and general positive communication tips. This includes possible expansion of efforts to parents of younger children
- ⇒ Continued support for Pure Performance and Fall Activity Night, in collaboration with the Northfield High School
- ⇒ Support efforts to continually enhance local school curriculum around youth substance use, in collaboration with the local schools
- ⇒ Continuation of Mayor's Task Force website ([www.mayorstaskforcenorthfield.org](http://www.mayorstaskforcenorthfield.org))
- ⇒ Continuation of the court monitoring program of individuals in Rice County charged with providing alcohol to minors and/or supplying drugs to others
- ⇒ Continuation of the Positive Community Norms ("MOST Northfield students") campaign at the Northfield Middle School through the end of 2009-10 school year
- ⇒ Continued support of the Opiate Agonist Therapy Clinic at Northfield Hospital and local administration of Buprenorphine
- ⇒ Encouragement of efforts to open a halfway house in Northfield and community education on this topic

Examination of local data and evaluation efforts around substance use (what is tracked, how it is tracked, and how the community is informed of the results)

### **Mayor's Youth Council**

*Submitted by Katherine Peterson, Chair*

Last month we decided to apply once again to be a part of the 100 Best Communities for Young People; we will start the application process in about mid-March. We also heard a request from Mayor Mary Rossing and City Administrator Joel Walinski to draft a citizenship guide and handbook for Northfield, which we accepted and are very excited about. We presented our draft of the Mayor's Action Challenge application to Mayor Rossing, and will present to her again when we've finished adding more specific details to our key action steps.

### **Planning Commission**

*Submitted by Tracy Davis, Chair*

As noted in last month's report, in February the Planning Commission continued its *arduous* weekly meetings on the review of the draft Land Development Code. The Commission is now finalizing the site development standards for residential zones which apply to the current built environment (not standards for currently undeveloped areas, which will be different). We hope to get this section finished and on the council's agenda for their work session in April.

During the review process we've had the benefit of some excellent research and information provided by City staff, including statistical analysis of the current built area ratios on residential lots, and estimates of lot coverage of impervious service; information on performance standards and best practices for managing surface water runoff; and examples from different cities around the country as to how they handle various aspects of neighborhood compatibility standards.

We're tired, but hopeful.

cc: Board & Commission Chairs  
Department Managers