

Memorandum

DATE: March 28, 2008
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Al Roder, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of March 24 - 28, 2008

Here is a list of city activities for the week of March 24 - 28, 2008:

Administration

Northfield City Staff have taken on a new challenge over the last two weeks. From March 10th thru the 25th, we have conducted a change challenge. The goal was to raise as much money as possible to be donated to the food bank where it was matched during the month of March. In total, city staff raised \$890.99 in two weeks, which translates into nearly 4,000 pounds of food. Wastewater raised the largest dollar amount with \$241!!! The Liquor Store was close behind with \$217 and had the highest total per employee at \$17.12. Many thanks to all who support this worthwhile cause for our community. Through this process we learned that the food bank serves over 1,000 people each month. Earlier this month the Fire Department held a food drive and raised over 6,000 pounds of food as well.

It's Meals-On-Wheels time again! As we have in the past, the City will be taking one week and driving for Meals-On-Wheels. This year, we will be delivering the week of April 27–May 3. If you would like to volunteer a day to deliver meals, please notify Kathy Fredrickson as soon as possible.

A public reception was held on Thursday evening at the Grand for the Police Chief candidates. Interviews were held on Friday, and next week has been set aside for second interviews, if necessary. We hope to bring a recommendation to the council by the end of April.

Finance

Council Subcommittee on the CIP: The group's meeting scheduled for March 28th was cancelled due to conflicts with Police Chief interviews. The day and time for these meetings will also be changing to Monday's at 8 a.m. The next meeting will occur sometime in mid-April once audit fieldwork has been completed. We hope to have the full Council review the modified 2008-2012 CIP in late May at a work session. This would allow sufficient time to then hold a public hearing on the revisions in late June / early July – well before the next cycle is in full gear.

2008 Adopted Budget: The current year budget document has been printed with a copy being distributed to you with this week's Friday Memo. Copies will be made available for public viewing at the Library and in the Finance Department at City Hall. The number of copies is limited due to the cost to produce. If an individual needs a copy, they can be purchased at cost plus sales tax (\$16.08). In the future, we will modify the files so that they can be readily converted to a PDF file and made available on the City's website.

Year-end 2007 & the audit: Finance staff has completed year-end close and is ready for audit fieldwork. This is two months ahead of last year – when both the Finance Director and Accountant were new to the process (in Northfield). Doing the audit so late in the year caused interference in the budget development process. For the 2009 budget development process starting in May – the audit will be complete. Despite numerous setbacks, progress in routine matters has been made in the last year.

Preliminary year-end results (subject to audit adjustment) show an increase in unpaid property taxes. Given the economy and distress in the housing market this isn't that surprising. A breakdown by fund is shown below:

The largest increase in delinquent taxes comes from 2007. Out of the total owed of \$175,952, \$126,970 represent

	Balance at	Balance at	Change	
	12/31/2006	12/31/2007	\$	%
General Fund (operations)	63,703	101,421	37,718	59.2%
Debt Service (bond) Funds	17,070	12,653	(4,418)	-25.9%
NCRC Bonds (market value)	5,116	6,260	1,144	22.4%
Subtotal - City property taxes	<u>85,889</u>	<u>120,333</u>	<u>34,444</u>	40.1%
EDA	3,083	4,854	1,771	57.4%
HRA	2,906	3,990	1,083	37.3%
Tax Increment Districts:				
Master Development	15,776	34,717	18,941	120.1%
Lincoln Woods	4,316	2,366	(1,950)	-45.2%
Presidential Commons	967	-	(967)	-100.0%
Cannon Commerical	-	6,650	6,650	*
Riverfront	-	3,042	3,042	*
Total - all property taxes and tax increments	<u><u>112,938</u></u>	<u><u>175,952</u></u>	<u><u>63,015</u></u>	55.8%

current year (2007) taxes. Collections on delinquent taxes from prior years results in the total actually decreasing for the Debt Service Funds and two of the tax increment districts.

How does 2007 compare to prior years – in terms of uncollected taxes? The table below is taken from one of the statistical tables in the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. I've updated it to show 2007.

Fiscal Year Ended December 31,	Taxes Levied For The Fiscal Year	Collected Within The Fiscal Year of the Levy	
		Amount	Percentage of Levy
1998	2,832,937	2,809,706	99.18%
1999	2,894,315	2,916,667	100.77%
2000	2,924,892	2,893,884	98.94%
2001	3,347,671	3,251,290	97.12%
2002	3,502,438	3,514,164	100.33%
2003	3,680,631	3,649,519	99.15%
2004	4,157,608	3,839,943	92.36%
2005	4,206,893	4,162,106	98.94%
2006	4,697,878	4,632,528	98.61%
2007	5,033,926	4,944,441	98.22%

Information Technology

What a busy week! The technology department had a busy week completing miscellaneous issues related to the new phone system. It's nice to report that we are finished with the bulk of the qwerky stuff that comes up when you install a completely new system!

The Fiber Optics Feasibility Task Force has met four times. Some of our discussion items over the last four weeks have been:

- 1) Broadband options and the role of fiber in our community
- 2) Technology options with fiber. Wendy from Elert and Associates was our guest presenter on this discussion topic. She shared with the group hands-on examples of the different electronics and fiber.
- 3) Network services options. Hiawatha Broadband Communications (HBC) was our guess presenter. They shared insight on how they developed various fiber initiatives in Winona and area communities. HBC gave several examples of where fiber optics played an important role on the economic development and healthcare in the Winona area.
- 4) Financing options were discussed during our fourth visit. Brenda from Springsted Incorporated discussed what to consider when building a fiber optic network. Items such as: who owns the system; who manages the system; what assets do the players have to offer; and the MN regulations for financing such a network.

Next week the four local telephone providers in our area have been invited to visit and share with the task force their interest in partnerships where the vendor would run their services over a city funded fiber optic network.

Melissa Reeder, along with individuals from the Water Department, met to discuss upgrades for the SCADA system. Future planning to leverage our existing network for this project are being researched.

Kurt Wolf has been working on a project to add disk space to our Engineering server which will allow ootles of space for GIS (geographical information system). This will position us with space for future aerial pictures and data.

Public Services

Recreation

Staff attended the monthly coordinating meeting of the Defeat of Jesse James Days volunteer committee to begin working through the logistics of relocating the carnival event from Ames Park given the Council direction of March 17, 2008. In relocating the carnival the committee identified several concerns; prominent display of the carnival for advertising and promotion, safe access by attendees, proximity to other events, and implications on surrounding area and activities. The committees preference is to relocate the carnival in Riverside Park and move the one day Car Show to Memorial Field Park. Discussions will continue with the Park and Recreation Advisory Board in April.

Renovations have begun at the arena. The contractor is removing the current refrigeration system and preparing for installation of the new one. Asbestos testing is being done to determine if any of the planned improvements will disturb asbestos containing material. The Book Fair will set-up beginning next week.

Facilities

The Council approved Johnson Control Energy improvements are beginning to get underway. The arena demolition and removal of the current mechanical equipment began on Thursday. Lighting improvements identified for City facilities are scheduled to begin the week of April 9, 2008. Staff is also working with Johnson representatives reviewing the scheduled security improvements and the possibilities of linking those with the current SKADA utility monitoring system. Next week City staff and Johnson representatives will be meeting with tenants at the Northfield Community Resource Center to review project schedules and potential implications on the building operations through the project completion.

Facilities started a project this week refinishing the Library tables. The tables are brought into the shop one at a time so that it doesn't cause any inconveniences. Also we are going to refinish some of the edges on the counter tops.

Facilities also completed the cleaning project in the kitchen at the NCRC, which included washing the ceiling tiles, walls, cupboards, doors and the stainless steel equipment.

Progress continues on changing the locks within the City, Bernie Shakal and TJ Heinrich had a meeting this week with the representative from Best Locks Inc., the Company that supplies the key codes enabling us to re-pin our existing locks. The next project is the Maintenance Facility, Transit Facility and all of the Parks. The new Pool and the Ice Arena are already finished.

The office remodeling at the Safety Center is almost complete, the painting will be finished on Friday and the carpet will be installed on Tuesday April 1, and that is NO April FOOLS.

Streets and Parks

This week the staff has been busy trying to keep up with the potholes that are showing up with the spring weather. On Thursday Steve Petricka and Tom Pansier were able to get hot mix asphalt from St. Paul, which should help with the quality of the repairs.

Also staff has been busy at the Arena cleaning up the remainder of ice and water left from the ice season. Lenny Moore spent some time cleaning up the water and Bryan Haugen, Chris Van Zuilen, and Ricky Martinez helped with several end of the year items at the arena as well.

Wastewater

During the week Wastewater Operators finished a complete rebuild of the Ultra Violet disinfection system. All new wiring and seals were installed with components thoroughly inspected and returned to original specifications. All effluent leaving the Wastewater treatment plant is directed thru the UV system and is disinfected before being discharged into the Canon River.

Water

Basam Banat from the Minnesota Department of Health (Drinking Water Section) came to the Water Division on Wednesday to take yearly bacteria tests from all four wells and interview the Water Superintendent for any changes that may have occurred to the water system over the last 12 months. Results of the tests will be sent within the next few weeks.

Jay Hall has been updating the meter records from all the meter changes that have taken place within the last couple of months. Staff changed out approximately 175 meter since the first of the year.

Three fire hydrants were reported damaged this week. One at the corner of West 5th Street and Odd fellows Lane, one at Jefferson Parkway and Presidential Drive and one in the 1200 block of Jefferson Road. These hydrants are scheduled to be repaired as soon as possible.

Doug Lien attended the Suburban Utilities Superintendents Association meeting held in Woodbury on Wednesday afternoon. Kyle Colvin Assistant Manager of Engineering & Planning for the Met Council conducted a discussion on Communities with excessive inflow and infiltration of clear water into the regional sanitary sewer systems and how they are taking action to reduce the problem.

Engineering

Woodley Street

Property Acquisition continued this week. There are a few parcels that are being acquired from townhome associations that will require signatures from a majority of the members. Enough of these residents are on winter escapes that acquisition of these parcels cannot be completed until their return. The status of the properties as of the end of the day on Thursday was:

Number of Properties	Northfield	Rice County	Total Project
Total Properties to Acquire	22	5	27
Verbally Committed	5	1	6
Signed Forms	5	1	6

Staff will be holding a Neighborhood open house on April 2, 2008 from 5:00-6:30 PM in the Council Chambers to present the options for the landscaping plan that include two locations for the electric lines.

1. Xcel will move the poles within the public right-of-way/utility easement on the current side (north side) of the road.
2. Xcel will move the poles to the south side of the road within the public right-of-way.

Public Input received at the open house will be presented to the Council at the April 7 meeting as the council considers the landscaping plan options. Pending a decision on April 7, work to relocate trees will be completed this spring prior to the growing season as recommended by the forester's report.

Water Street and 5th Street Reconstruction

The design team of Bonestroo, Bolton & Menk, and City staff met with the Streetscape Task Force this week to discuss details of the streetscape elements. Items discussed included street light recommendations, tree types, and modification of the decorative fences at corners to meet the City's sight distance requirements. Also discussed were modifications to

the standard fence originally selected by the task force that is to be used along the river due to recommendations from the Historic Preservation Commission. The design team continues to finalize plans and specifications that will be presented to the City Council on April 7 for approval and authorization to bid.

Community Development

Staff is analyzing the implication of using the rural service district tax authority the City Council has, which may result in a lower tax rate being applied to property that is being considered for annexation west of the hospital. The adjustment in the tax rate is totally at the discretion of the Council. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine what the lower tax rate means to the property owners and also what it will mean to the city in terms of the tax revenues. This information will be part of the analysis that is underway with respect to the request for annexation.

Staff has evaluated the status of the proposed Comprehensive Plan to determine what revisions are remaining to be completed now that the Commission has finished the initial review of the document. Soon, the Plan will progress to the final stages of review prior to a final round of public information sharing and referral to City council for action.

Economic Development

The EDA road trip to Chaska was the highlight of this week. Staff particularly enjoyed a comment made by the officials and staff of Chaska; When asked what they would like to be when they "grow up", they responded they wanted to be another Northfield. What a wonderful compliment to this community! Their newly acquired college, as well as their new hospital site, contributed to this response.

The EDA met this week. The Land Committee and the Redevelopment Committee continue to meet to find additional ways to assist prospective clients.

Fiber Optics Task Force: The task force had a full agenda with a particular focus on finance and dollars needed this month. A variety of options and opportunities were discussed.

Housing

The HRA closed on the purchase of the Southbridge site this week, and are officially the owners of said parcel. Work will now move forward full force on planning the development. The HRA met this week and reviewed concept plans of the neighborhood as prepared by Andy Masterpole of Yaggy-Colby. Mr. Masterpole will present these same designs next week at the Community Input Meeting on Thursday, April 3 from 6-8pm in Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the development is welcome to attend and comment on the concept drawings.

Planning

The Planning Commission met this week and recommended approval to the City Council of two conditional use permits (CUP). The first CUP is an amendment of a CUP to allow the Northfield Golf Club to serve alcohol to the general public (when the CUP was first approved in 1993, the Club was restricted to only serving alcohol to members and their guests). The second CUP is to allow for the construction of two new residence halls on the Carleton College campus north of 1st Street, between Maple and Nevada Streets. The City Council will review these items in April.

Building

The Emmaus Baptist Church will be issued a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy on Monday. They have added about 8,000 square feet to their building.

cc: Department Managers