

Memorandum

DATE: May 7, 2010
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of May 3-7, 2010

At last week's Chamber of Commerce membership forum Paul Knutson, Rice County Assessor, SAMA, RES provided information on understanding your commercial property taxes: the methodology assessors use in establishing values and how property taxes are assessed. Mr. Knutson also presented some comparative data on property taxes in the Northfield area. In 2010, the comparative property taxes on a **\$400,000 commercial property** located in various surrounding south eastern Minnesota cities is identified in the table below:

City	Tax	City	Tax
1 Waseca	\$14020	8 Rochester	\$12250
2 Dodge Center	\$13786	9 Wabasha	\$12172
3 Albert Lea	\$13690	10 Northfield	\$11934
4 Farmington	\$13316	11 Lakeville	\$11808
5 Red Wing	\$12950	12 Austin	\$11532
6 Caledonia	\$12673	13 Winona	\$11000
7 Owatonna	\$12420	14 Faribault	\$10349

One effort the City of Northfield has made in the past is to hold the property tax levy below the state imposed 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 the City did not opt to take advantage of those special levies that would have allowed for the levy of 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 \$140,887. The total reductions and the unused levy limit and special levies total \$969,898 in 2010.

Attached to today's Friday Memo is the April Update from the Boards and Commissions.

As you know, the City of Northfield has teamed up with KYMN radio to provide live and archived internet streaming of Council Meetings and Work Sessions. The agenda indexing is now in place and should be beneficial in reviewing archived Council Meetings. To view meetings, go to <http://www.kymnradio.net> and on right side click on City Council Video. Archived meetings will have markers signifying each agenda item to provide the viewer with the option of jumping ahead to an item of particular interest. Viewers will also find a link on Northfield's City Council web page: <http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/government/citycouncil>.

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of May 3-7, 2010:

CITY CLERK

Submitted by Deb Little

Two community events applications have been received. The deadline for applications requesting in-kind community grant support for 2010 is Friday, May 14. The community events information can be found on the City's website at <http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/cityservices/communityeventpolicy> . Anyone with questions or needing assistance should contact Deb Little at 507-645-3001 or via e-mail at deb.little@ci.northfield.mn.us.

Staff issued three fireworks licenses this week for fireworks sales inside stores at Cub Foods, Target and Holiday.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

Staff has contacted the owners of the properties at 150 South Water Street and 303 South Water Street with regards to the inquiry to either sell city owned land or to purchase privately owned land for redevelopment purposes. This is in response to the direction obtained from the City Council meeting of May 4, 2010. Staff will be negotiating with these property owners and bringing the items back to City Council for final decisions.

The Community Development Director and the City Planner participated in the public open house process recently related to the Storm Water Management Ordinances that are in the early stages of being written. The Storm Water Management Ordinances will need to coordinate with Shore Land Management Ordinances that currently exist or that will be revised in the future.

The documents related to the Contract for Private Development for the Crossing project are being reviewed by representatives from Piper-Jaffray and Highland Bank. Staff expects to receive any suggested changes very soon so that this item, can be acted on by the City Council for the Council meeting of May 18, 2010.

Economic Development

Submitted by Jody T. Gunderson, Director

The City Council has instructed City staff to meet with representatives of the Northfield Union of Youth and negotiate a purchase price for the building they are vacating on Water Street. The City has a contractual agreement with the Union of Youth that provides the right of first refusal for the purchase of their property. If the City does purchase the building it would be combined with the City owned property and sold to a party interested in redeveloping the two sites. In the event that the City purchases the Union of Youth property, the City Council has requested that the Economic Development Authority facilitate the process leading to the sale and redevelopment of the two sites.

The Economic Development Authority's Infill and Redevelopment work group met to discuss what measures should be undertaken by the EDA to accommodate the City Council's request. The work group believed it should draft a request for proposal (RFP) which would serve as a solicitation to interested developers. The RFP would outline minimum and competitive requirements for the redevelopment project. The EDA would evaluate each proposal submitted and provide a recommendation to the City Council. Additionally, the work group believed that in order to expedite this process, the EDA Board should meet in a special session to discuss what elements should be included in the RFP.

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Zoning Board of Appeals met on Thursday, and approved variances for a front entryway addition at 1065 Summerfield Drive, and a variance at Bridgewater Elementary School to construct 35 additional parking spaces on the property. This meeting was followed by a Planning Commission meeting at which the Commission recommended approval to the City Council of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Amendment for the additional parking at Bridgewater School. The Council will consider approval of this Amendment at a future meeting.

Staff attended a Board and Commission input meeting to begin drafting the new Storm Water Ordinance, and attended a meeting of the Labor Management meeting, in which the group discussed ways to resolve the 2010 budget shortfalls that the City is experiencing.

ENGINEERING

Construction Update: Fourth Street between Division St & Washington St will be CLOSED on Friday May 7, 2010 from 7AM-3:30PM so that BCM can conduct exploratory digging to determine the bedrock depth throughout the street. The street will reopen until construction on Phase 1A starts on May 12, 2010.

FINANCE

Submitted by Kathleen McBride, Finance Director

2009 Audit Fieldwork: Fieldwork is wrapping up on the 2009 audit. There is much more work to do to compile the financial statements and year-end regulatory reports, however.

With the earlier audit schedule, staff will be in a position to present an update on the City's funds and their financial status at a work session in June.

Rate Search / Investment Loss: It appears that the City will receive a bit more restitution from the court. One of the banks involved has not released the proceeds of a CD held because of their concerns about ownership. The City Attorney is working with the US Attorney's office in St. Louis to settle this matter. The CD's value at this time is just over \$103,000. The City will receive anywhere between \$50,000 - \$60,000 of this.

LIBRARY

Submitted by Lynne Young, Director

A DVD about the library premiered on Wednesday evening at St. Olaf's Viking Theater. The DVD was created by student interns Kenzie Huffman, Kai Hansen and Joe Erickson. Sarah Marrs, another St. Olaf student who worked on the exhibit at the Northfield Historical Society, was featured in the DVD. The students did a great job of integrating the library's complete history, including the Lyceum Society's reading room in 1856, the beginnings of the publicly funded library in 1898, the opening of the Carnegie building in 1910 and the growth of library services to the present time. The focus, though, was on Andrew Carnegie and the impact that his library building program had here in Northfield. Along with thanks to these students for their excellent work, we would like to thank Hayes Scriven and the Northfield Historical Society for their hard work in supporting the exhibit (which will be up until August) and the production of the DVD. They were all wonderful to work with. Copies of the DVD will be made available at the library and the Historical Society. The exhibit and the DVD were funded in part or in whole with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008 which dedicated funding to preserve Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage.

On Saturday, May 8, the fifth Carnegie Centennial Concert will be held upstairs at the library. String quartets from St. Olaf, led by Andrea Een, will be the featured musicians. Coffee and cake are served at 7:00 – the

concert begins at 7:30. The public is invited to this free event which is provided through a grant from the Northfield Area Foundation and also supported by the Friends of the Library.

The library staff have finished with a major shift of the collections. The Friends of the Library purchased a new display unit which is located downstairs in the "new" new book section. All audiobooks have been moved upstairs. The staff and many volunteers worked hard to complete this shift just in time for the library's birthday party on April 25.

Library staff held their regular monthly staff meeting this morning. Topics included an update on the upcoming summer reading program, including scheduled first grade tours that begin this week.

PUBLIC WORKS

Facilities

Submitted by Bernie Shakal, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor

Facilities was busy this week with a variety of projects. We assisted the Safety Center with their clean up project, by doing some interior painting of doors and trim. Also some projects started at City hall, the IT Department has some equipment installed in a cabinet in the Council Chambers that needed to have ventilation added to prevent overheating.

I have been in contact with the I&S Group regarding the heating and ventilation project at the Community Action Center, construction documents are due to be completed next week, followed by selection of a contractor to implement the modifications.

I was successful in obtaining building plan information for the City Hall Building from the Hay Dobbs Architectural Company; they had previously done some design work on the building. This information was forwarded to Professional Design Group, Inc. so that they can proceed with a plan for installation of new windows in the building. Along with this project, the goal is to have new front and rear doors replaced also.

Recreation

Submitted by Jason Eisold

Pre-season pool pass sales started this past week, Thursday, May 6 was the first of 5 preseason sales. Dates for the remain sales are posted on our web site <http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/parksandrec/pool> Hopefully the cool rainy weather is short lived and we return quickly to the heat and the sun!

Staff began awaking the pool from its winter hibernation. Water was turned on to the buildings, trees were trimmed, solar field piping was painted and concrete repairs were again made in the bathhouse area. The large amount of ground water in this area is causing a lot of frost heave and crack/spalling to a number of panels. We hope to have corrected the problem with increased concrete thickness, better expansion joints and saw cutting all of our joints.

Streets and Parks

Submitted by TJ Heinrich, Streets and Parks Supervisor

Weekly mowing of City parks and other areas continues, however, weather hampered some mowing operations. Parks saw weekly garbage cleanup. A case of vandalism was cleaned up at a park. Staff was busy this week cleaning up fallen trees and branches due to the high winds. Staff assisted the Water Division with a turf repair. There were several sign repairs this week. The downtown banners were changed this week in observance of St Olaf college upcoming graduation.

The City of Northfield cleanup day was a successful. There were 356 visits from citizens. The compost facility saw 2,659 visits during the month of April. Preparations have been made for the startup of the fountain on Bridge Square next week. Staff attended annual fire extinguisher training this week.

Wastewater

Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent

There was a significant increase in man-hours devoted to collection system operations this week. Parts of the system that do not have much flow, like dead ends etc, were flushed out to make sure debris does not accumulate and cause problems in the future. Several hours were also spent brushing and clearing right of ways through wooded areas so equipment could access the manholes if a problem occurred. Our main line runs right thru the Carleton Arb. The college does not want something that looks like an access road running thru the Arb, so WW staff works with Carleton staff to maintain reasonable access in the least noticeable way.

Water

Submitted by Doug Lien, Water Superintendent

Water Operator Scott Murphy completed the quarterly fluoride test on Wednesday. This test sample is then sent to the MDH (Minnesota Department of Health) for analysis. The sample is taken in different locations during the year throughout the distribution system and analyzed with Water Division testing equipment. We then send that sample to the MDH and they test from the same sample and compare the results to the Water Division test. This is done so the MDH is assured that our testing equipment is working properly and that we are adding the correct amount of fluoride to the system.

Operators Scott Murphy and Lenny Moore gathered monthly bacteria samples and sent them to Minnesota Valley Testing for analysis. The results will be sent back to the Water Division in a few days. Scott Murphy and Seasonal Employee Tom Spooner also installed the water sales equipment at the Maintenance Facility this week. Faribo Plumbing tested the back-flow device that is installed in line before the water sales equipment. This protects the City water from back siphon problems. This equipment allows the public to insert money into a dispenser and it releases a certain amount of water in a specific time period. This purchase of water can be done 24-7 from May 1st through October 15th.

Rod Svien and Tom Spooner started with the Water Division on Monday as Seasonal Employees.

cc: Department Managers