

Memorandum

DATE: June 6, 2008
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Al Roder, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of June 2 - 6, 2008

Here is a list of city activities for the week of June 2 - 6, 2008:

Finance

Draft 2008 – 2012 CIP: Staff will be taking the CIP presentation on the road. The parks and recreation section will be discussed with the Parks & Rec Advisory Board at their meeting next week. Part of that discussion will be analyzing the impact of the proposed projects with available funding through the Park Fund. We already know there is not sufficient funds available and the timing / amount allocated to any specific project will require modification. The PRAB will be encouraged to hold public input meetings over the summer months and provide the Subcommittee with their recommendations by the end of August.

Staff also hopes to meet with the Library Board in the near future. Presentations are being planned for the Rotary and the NDDC, as well.

Staff has not received many comments other than those given at the public hearing on Monday night. The public comment card form has been added to the website so when individuals are looking for the draft CIP document they can clearly see the comment form, too.

Budget Outlook - 2009: This discussion is scheduled for the June 23rd work session. By that time, staff hopes to have completed deciphering the levy limit legislation and be able to report the impact on the 2009 General Fund levy.

By that the time as well, staff will try to complete the update of the debt service funds and debt levies in order to gauge next year's total levy. New debt – based upon the 2008 – 2012 CIP will be the final component.

At this time, Rice County has only provided a verbal estimate on next year's tax base saying that it will be flat. Dakota County's preliminary reports are available on their website already and they show Northfield's tax base dropping by .2%. Given this, any increase in the levy will result in a tax rate increase for next year.

Library

The third of three public meetings "Picturing the Possibilities" for an expanded library on the current site will be held on Tuesday, June 10, at St. Johns' Lutheran Church from 7-9:00 p.m. MS&R Architects have taken input from the first two meetings and will return with 2 concept drawings and rough floor plans and cost estimates for each. The Library Board is seeking broad public input on these concepts, and appreciate all those who participated in the first two meetings.

Library staff met this morning to work on action steps for the library's new long-range plan.

Library staff have again seen a significant increase in use. May is typically a one of the library's slowest months, but this year library circulation increased by 8% over May of 2007. So far for the year, library circulation has increase more than 9% over the same period in 2008 (almost 30,000 items this year.)

The Summer Reading program theme is "Catch the Reading Bug at Your Library." Children can pick their booklets at the library. Participants can come to the library to get their booklets updated during regular "investigation times": Monday from 5-8 pm, Tuesday and Wednesday from 1-4 p.m. and Saturday from 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

During the summer, regular preschool programs will be held. On Monday, First Steps is open from 10-12; on Tuesday, at 10:00 is the "Lapsit" program for infants. Wednesday at 10 is the Toddler Rhyme Time for 2-3 year-olds and Thursday morning features the pre-school story time for 4 and 5 year olds. First Steps is open from 10-12 am on both Friday and Saturday mornings. There will be no Saturday story times during the summer when the Carleton is not in session.

Thursdays are the big day for special summer children's programs. Thanks to the Northfield Area Foundation, the library will host visitors from Minnesota's past on Thursdays at 11:30. During this summer-long tribute to Minnesota's 150th birthday, local children will have the opportunity to meet a fur trader, a blacksmith, and Harriet Bishop, Minnesota's first educator. Children who have met their reading goals for the week are invited to have a pizza lunch following the programs.

Teens also have a special reading program – the 2008 Teen Reading Challenge. Young people in grades 6-12 can read and win small prizes and enter for drawings for larger prizes at the end of the summer. The Teen Advisory Board designed the reading challenge and picked out the prizes for the end of the year.

And the first Books and Stars program will be held on Wednesday, June 11, at Bridge Square. This will a good old fashioned sing-along with the Goodtimes Folk Song Trio.

Kathy Ness has been busy for months planning and organizing all these activities. Thanks for all your hard work, Kathy.

Once again, the library staff would like to thanks the Street Department staff (especially Ryan Kiefer) for taking good care of the bookmobile. Booker was off the road for a week because Diana Tallent was out of town for a family funeral and for another week while Ryan worked on the power steering. Regular bookmobile service should resume next week.

Public Services

Stormwater Management

The City's management practice for the maintenance and care of stormwater ponds was developed as part of the Surface Water Management Plan throughout 2007. The purpose of the Plan was to establish standards for storm water runoff management, erosion control, floodplain management, storm water treatment, and wetland management, and to guide the City's programs and priorities for managing water resources over the next 10 years. As the council may recall:

The plan development began in January 2007

The process included input from a Task Force made up of interested residents, City Council, Planning Commission, Rice County, developers, Environmental Quality Commission, and the Cannon River Watershed Partnership.

All meeting were posted and public participation was encouraged and invited.

The Council approved the Surface water management plan September 10, 2007.

This plan is the basis for establishing the new stormwater fee structure and the enacting ordinances. The fees are based on identifying the management needs of the stormwater system, developing costs for the management program, and then establishing the fee program to pay for the program.

Specifically, relating to the stormwater pond management program, the City currently has 62 stormwater retention areas, 27 of those are stormwater ponds. The City has taken a proactive approach to reducing the amount of sediment and nutrient runoff that collect in the stormwater ponds. Examples would include the reduction of sand used on City streets for ice control, the sweeping of all City streets twice per year, reduction in fertilizer and pesticide use on general park land turf, and the establishment of native plantings encompassing many of the storm water pond areas to reduce surface water runoff and erosion. Additionally, as part of the pond maintenance program and as the new stormwater fees are implemented, funds within the stormwater fund will be made available for the dredging of existing stormwater ponds.

Treating for aesthetic conditions would require the review and either an increase of stormwater fees or a change in prioritization of the current management practices. Chemical and or biological treatment would need to be considered not just for one pond area; the treatment program would need to be applicable for treatment on all pond locations. As the Surface Water Management Plan was developed, an aesthetic maintenance program for the management of stormwater ponds was not identified as a priority for those involved in the planning process, although the door was open for all to attend.

Building Inspection

The City Attorney, Community Development Director and the Building Official will meet Friday to review the proposed revisions to the rental code. We hope to have a document ready for City Council's review and approval by late June or early July.

Community Development

Staff will be meeting with the City attorney to review proposed changes to the rental ordinance to bring the ordinance into compliance with the recent Supreme Court decision. It is expected that this item will be on the agenda of the City Council workshop on June 23.

Staff and members of the Business Park Committee met with representatives from Dunbar Development Corporation to begin the process of negotiating a purchase option with the land owners related to the 3rd business park.

Economic Development

One of the two interns for Economic Development started this week. Bill Bartz will be working closely with the existing loan and grant programs, both in assisting new clients as well as monitoring and reporting on current clients. Bill is also working on developing a list of available infill sites for businesses.

Staff is working on documentation related to several business subsidy agreements that have been processed in the past to make corrections to information that is contained in the agreement. These agreements are also being sent to the County Auditors office and the County Assessors office to make certain that the records of the County are the same as the records of the City with respect to this incentive program.

Engineering

Water and 5th Street Information Handout #2 attached.

Housing

Dakota County Community Development Agency monitored Northfield this week for our Community Development Block Grant program. These funds come through Dakota County from HUD and are used for a variety of rehab, first time homebuyer and public service programs. The visit went well and no changes in our programs need to be made. CDA was very pleased with our spend-down ratio and commended staff and sub-recipients of the efficient and effective way the programs are managed.

Staff continues to prepare the HRA and City Council on the tax abatement request from Dominion Development for Jefferson Square Townhomes. The redevelopment effort is the key proponent of the tax credit request to MN Housing Finance Agency. Currently, Jefferson Square is on a project-based Section 8 subsidy, due to be done in 2010. Without being re-funded by MHFA, it is likely these units will go market rate and reduce affordable rental sites in Northfield by 50 units. The HRA is committed to retaining these units and has instructed staff to do extensive research on the feasibility of providing tax abatement.

Facilities

Facilities has been busy this week with spring clean up work at the NCRC, which includes cleaning debris from shrubs, trimming and adding mulch to the landscape. An extensive amount of work was done last year, so this year's efforts will be much reduced.

Work continues this week preparing the mechanical room at the arena for the new equipment to be installed. Some of the work includes removing old heaters, brackets from walls and preparing walls to be painted.

Bernie Shakal has been working on a HVAC problem at the Safety Center, the pressure tank which supplies the water to the chiller has been malfunctioning since the tank is 38 years old. We think it can be saved and the air conditioning should be up and running on Friday.

Progress continues with Johnson Controls and we now have the automation for three City buildings on a computer program, which will allow us numerous capabilities.

Recreation

Pre-Season pool pass sale sold 575 passes (a little less than a 1/4 of all of last year's total pool pass sales!!). The climbing wall was delivered but several panels had defects and needed to be returned. An update as to when it will be re-shipped is expected by next week. The pool open for the season on Friday, for more information on hours, rates, fees please contact the pool 645-1837.

The arena renovation is progressing nicely, half of the floor is set-up for the installation of the refrigeration lines. The main refrigeration line and header is installed.

Planning

The Planning Commission met this week to review Chapter 4, Land Use, of the draft Comprehensive Plan. Staff will attend next Monday's City Council Work Session to discuss the proposed 530-acre business park annexation request before Council action on June 16th, and to discuss how park dedication fees are calculated.

Streets/Parks

Staff was busy working on sinkhole repairs on Thursday on the corner on 1st and Plum and other pothole repairs continue throughout the city. Downtown beautification continues with the Streets and Parks staff.

General park maintenance and improvements are underway with all the seasonal employees now hired and working. Char Carlson Park had several trees planted this week, which improved the park appearance quickly, and as the grass comes in it should begin to look more complete as the summer continues.

Water

Water Operator Jay Hall is performing a radio read meter account audit to verify the accuracy of all meter and account information that was inputted in the monthly meter readings.

Crew Leader Scott Murphy, and seasonal employees Adam Christopherson and Erik Beumer have been flushing fire hydrants this week during the evening hours. They have been flushing from 10 PM thru 6 AM and will finish the flushing by Friday morning. The Water Division started flushing hydrants at night a few years ago to reduce the effects on the citizens. Due to the flushing any mineral sediment in the lines becomes very stirred up and is mostly

sent out of the hydrants. By the time most people wake up the water has settled down and most of the sediment is flushed out. As this annual program has progressed the amount of mineral sediment has been reduced significantly allowing valves and hydrants to be operated much more easily. If you have any concerns please feel free to contact the Water Division at 645-3051.

Water Superintendent Doug Lien has been working on the planning for a cold storage building. It will be located on the Hall Avenue water tower site. It will be located just south of the cell tower location.

Wastewater

Lightning related power glitches caused numerous call outs and software problems this week. In all cases the affected systems reset without problems. As a follow up to the ground fault issues in the UV system that were discussed last week the equipment supplier was contacted. They indicated that the original equipment high voltage wiring (1500 volt DC) in these arms that move up and down for maintenance had a very soft insulation that is subject to abrasion. They have changed the type of wire used in newer models. The new style of wire has been ordered so any future problems of this nature will be fixed with more abrasion resistant wire.

Justin Wager and Collin Miller, the Wastewater Division's summer employees, are quickly learning the responsibilities relating to their primary task of assisting collection system maintenance functions. More than 16,000 ft of sanitary sewer was jet cleaned and/or televised this week.

cc: Department Managers