

## Memorandum

DATE: June 12, 2009  
TO: Mayor & Council Members  
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator  
RE: Friday Memo for the week of June 8-12, 2009

The following information was received from the League of Minnesota Cities from a meeting that was held between the league and the Department of Revenue Commissioner Mr. Ward Einess:

- The budget-balancing unallotments for 2009 and 2010 aids and credits could be officially announced as early as next week but definitely before the end of June. The administration has not finalized all of the details, but the remaining decisions have been narrowed.
- The cuts to cities and counties will almost certainly be computed as a percentage of each city's levy plus aid (certified 2009 levy plus certified 2009 LGA plus taconite aids). This is the same basis used forth December 2008 unallotment reductions and it is the basis that has most frequently been used by the legislature and governor when cuts have been imposed.
- The Commissioner stated that as of today, no city will have a cut greater than the original cuts proposed by the governor in his January budget. Unfortunately, he did not provide anyone with specifics of the magnitude or exact structure of the cuts.

I did have the opportunity to meet with Mr. Larry Benjamin and Mr. John Benjamin of Northfield Lines, Inc. this week to discuss the potential expansion of commuter bus service this fall. Besides daily bus service to downtown Minneapolis, St. Paul and the airport, they will be offering various bus service hours on weekends to those same locations. Both Larry and John not only identified the commuter service as the target customer but reverse commuting for folks working in Northfield and living in the metro area and potential weekend visitors from the metro area. The City will be working with Northfield Lines to identify a possible downtown location for bus pick up and commuter parking. The timing of this fits well, as the data collected on use, frequency, and parking can be used in finalizing plans for the planned Northfield Transit Hub in 2010/2011. If you have suggestions on a possible temporary bus top for the commuter service, please let me know.

**Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of June 8-12, 2009:**

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

#### Building

*Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Official*

This week we continued to issue numerous residential permits for decks and remodeling projects. The decks are sprouting up all over town.

We have issued demolition permits for four of the six fire damaged houses. The building code requires permits for demolition or partial demolition of the structures. We have reviewed two of the four for completion of the demolition. Construction permits will be issued for the repair work of these four when the plans are complete. The other two have not been released by the State Fire Marshal for demolition or repair yet.

We are continuing to work with contractors at the Carleton Dorm project, the St Olaf Old Music building and the Pharmaceutical Solutions (Cannon Valley Vet Clinic) project for their final inspections and occupancy permits. All three projects are anticipating partial or full occupancy about August 1<sup>st</sup>.

We are working with the City Engineering Department to develop an enhanced Right-of-Way inspection program. The program, when finished, will provide a better way to track and manage the contractors and work performed in the City Right-of-Ways.

Plan reviews are in process for the numerous commercial projects, including the Jasnoch Apartments, CSMR and New Main at St Olaf. We have been in contact with other contractors and architects on other commercial projects proposed for the City.

### **Community Development**

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

Staff continues to make progress on establishing a base line for a business partnership for the development of a fiber optic network that would be deployed citywide. This work is on-going in preparation for a grant application seeking federal stimulus funding. The city expects to obtain grant guidelines and program regulation yet this summer, which will be used to help structure the grant application.

Review of the proposals for the Master Plan and Development strategy is well underway. The sub-committee of the EDA that is working on this large task is expecting to meet and discuss early proposal review conclusion next week.

The Community Development Director and the City Planner provided an overview to the Park and Recreation Advisory Board and the Economic Development Authority related to the process that has begun with respect to reviewing the Land Development Regulations. Citizens are urged to review the cities web site at [www.ci.northfield.mn.us](http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us) for additional links related to the land development regulations, including a general explanation of the review process, links to the regulations, meeting schedules and a feedback link.

### **Economic Development**

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

The Economic Development Authority held its regular board meeting on Thursday and approved a \$5,000 Micro Grant for Trinket Foundry, a small custom jewelry production and retail store located in Downtown Northfield. The company is currently operating out of space in the back storage room of Glass Garden Bead's retail store. Over the last several years the company has successfully expanded their product lines, which have necessitated the need for new equipment and production space. The company is preparing to expand its operations in Northfield and invest \$25,220.00 in equipment, expenses related to build-out for production space, and consulting services.

The Director also attended a meeting with its economic development partners, various retailers, and Mr. Bruce W. Schwartau, Extension Educator for University of Minnesota Extension to finalize the retail study that was undertaken for the City of Northfield.

### **Housing**

*Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager*

Staff sent out packets for next week's HRA meeting. The agenda is fully loaded this month as the Board will be taking a hard, thorough look at the five current CDBG programs. The programs, though successful, have not had a review in several years and it is time to make sure the regulations are in line with today's needs. Additionally, the HRA will be discussing what priorities for funding and programming exist, and whether or not a portion of the general fund should be allocated to these programs.

The regularly scheduled monthly HRA meeting was delayed one week due to staff and a commissioner attending a Green By Design Conference. The two main speakers, Hunter Lovins and Jerome Ringo, were excellent and provided various ways to decrease a carbon footprint of a household, a business and a city,

and how to look creatively at funding green rehab and green building. The HRA continues to be committed to providing green rehab and green construction: this is an exciting, innovative and new approach to the work they do. Keep your ears open for more information and projects to come!

Just when Staff thinks every first time buyer has called the office, three more call. Requests for this program have been literally pouring in and it is frustrating that staff is financially unable to assist everyone. Further funds are coming in July from CDBG, but staff is also looking to other sources to help fund this popular program.

## **Planning**

*Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner*

The Planning Commission met this week to review and make a recommendation to the City Council on a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for miscellaneous improvements at Sibley Elementary School, and for a Major Change to a PUD to allow a 10-unit assisted living facility on the Northfield Retirement Community campus. The City Council is expected to review those proposals at their regular meeting on July 6th.

The Commission also began its detailed review of the draft Land Development Code (LDC), which will continue throughout the summer. A website has been set up, <http://ldc.northfieldplan.org> to provide information and receive public comments on the draft LDC. Various meetings with Boards and Commissions, as well as other stakeholders, have been set up to review the LDC. The schedule of those meetings can be found on the website.

## **LIBRARY**

*Submitted by Lynne Young, Library Director*

The library staff deserve a lot of praise for the fine work they did on Monday, June 8. It was a record-setting day of circulation – 2,585 items! Is this a lot? YES! Our average hourly circulation is around 110 items. On Monday, the staff checked out double that. And, while they checked out this many items, they also registered 23 new users, checked in and shelved 2020 items and answered more than 65 reference questions. A cool, wet start to summer vacation probably contributed to the heavy use that day.

About 200 people enjoyed the Books & Stars kick off with Magician Star on Wednesday evening at Central Park. Next Wednesday, June 17, enjoy InishMohr, an Irish & Scottish quartet, at Odd Fellows Park, 7:00 pm. Booker opens at 6:30. The 2009 Books & Stars programs are presented with the help of a grant from the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council and with the support of the City of Northfield (Streets & Parks and Public Library) and the Community Services Division, Northfield Public Schools.

Mac Gimse, renowned local sculptor, will be the first guest in the visiting artist series. This will be followed by the first “lunch bunch” pizza lunch (Thank you, Domino’s!) for those who have met their reading goals this week. The visiting artist series is presented through a grant from the Northfield Area Foundation.

Joan Ennis led the Contemporary Women Writer’s book group in a discussion of *Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm During the Depression*.

The Financial Resources Committee of the Library Board met this week. Besides discussion about the 2010 budget, the group considered the next steps to be taken in regard to the RFP for a fundraising feasibility study. As part of SELCO’s consultant program (SELCO is the regional public library system to which Northfield belongs), a group of board members and other interested citizens will meet with two consultants regarding fundraising.

Library hours will be shortened beginning next week. For the summer months at least, library hours will now be Monday-Thursday, 9:30 am until 8:00 pm, Friday, 9:30 am – 5:30 pm and Saturday, 9:30 am – 5:00 pm. The library will also be closed on Sundays during the summer.

## **ENGINEERING**

*Submitted by Sean Simonson, Engineering Technician*

### **Woodley Street Reconstruction**

Crews finished up all storm sewer pipe installation late in the week on the entire job. Crews continue to haul in sand and class V gravel working their way towards Prairie Street. Work was slowed early in the week due to the rain over the previous weekend.

Crews expect to install curb and gutter the middle of next week on the rest of the job from Waters Edge Townhomes to Prairie Street. Other work next week include prepping the trail and roadway for the Base course of Bituminous. Paving of the base course of bituminous is scheduled for the week of June 22nd, barring any weather setbacks.

### **First Street Improvements**

Due to the rain last weekend, no work was completed on the job until Wednesday. Crews began installing the new sanitary sewer mains on the first phase of construction from Linden Street to Plum Street. Staff noted water service types as construction progressed, as noted in the Feasibility Report for the Project replacement of lead services was expected. Properties that were identified to have lead water services were noted, and property owners were notified. According to the City of Northfield Water Ordinance, if a lead water service is discovered during an Infrastructure Project, it is required to be replaced all the way to the structure. 5 properties have been identified in the first phase thus far as having lead water services. Staff has contacted those individuals and are in the process of getting service replacement easement agreements signed allowing the replacement up to the structure.

Crews anticipate installing services all next week. BCM will have their plumbing sub-contractor Faribo Plumbing on-site next week to install the 5 services from the Right-of-Way to the structure on the properties with lead water lines. All other properties not requiring service replacement all the way to the structure, will have their services installed new up the the Right-of-Way.

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

### **Facilities**

*Submitted by Bernie Shakal, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor*

Facilities staff has been busy this week, sprucing up around different buildings. The NCRC landscaping has been finished and the crew has moved on to the Safety Center. The Safety Center project will be more detailed as it hasn't been completed in a few years.

### **Streets and Parks**

*Submitted by TJ Heinrich, Streets & Parks Supervisor*

Staff had a busy Monday. Staff cleaned catch basins and dealt with park shelter cleaning. Shelters were used heavily this weekend due to reservations. Sechler Park shelter was vandalized with paint balls. Parks were mowed this week. Staff installed two drain covers at the outdoor pool. No overnight parking signs were installed at Babcock Park parking lot. Staff assisted with the Books & Stars program that started the season this week. Quotes were asked from contactors to make bituminous repairs to various locations on city streets. Quotes were also sought for making light bulb repairs to the field lights at Sechler and Babcock Parks. Questions about the Emerald Ash Borer are still being received and answered. There is an update to last week's Emerald Ash Borer bulletin on the City web site and attached to this weeks report. It explains the options of insecticides that can be used to fight off the Emerald Ash borer.

### **Recreation**

*Submitted by Jason Eisold, Recreation Manager*

The pool finally opened on Thursday for the first time this year! After 5 days of cold and rain, just over 100 people visited the pool on Thursday. Season pass sales have been going extremely well. The solar heating system for assisting to heat the pool water is in operation. Next weekend we will have our Free Fathers Day event for all dads that visit the pool on Sunday, June 21.

Wednesday, June 24 from 11:30-12:30 the Minnesota Wild Road Tour will be in town at the Northfield Ice Arena. Wild players, past and present will be on hand for the event. This event is open to the community.

## **Water**

*Submitted by Doug Lien, Water Superintendent*

Automatic Systems was at the Water Division on Tuesday and Wednesday to install the new equipment and upgrades on the SCADA (Supervisory Controls and Data Acquisition) system. This is the primary computer control system that monitors the operation of the water systems and alarm systems. The existing computer hardware was over 15 years old and the software was last updated just prior to the Y2K scenario. When it comes to computer equipment, the existing computer hardware and operating system were considered antique with many components non-replaceable. The new updated equipment includes a desktop computer and monitor, a new panelview controller, and new software for the SCADA system controls and alarm system. Another benefit of this upgrade is that, if a new communications system is set up for the City of Northfield, this new computer equipment will make the transition much easier.

## **Wastewater**

*Submitted by Gerald Ness, Wastewater Systems Technician*

The focus of Wastewater Division staff during the week was training. Wastewater personnel trained on the operation of the new Jet/Vac truck to familiarize themselves with new features and safety considerations. Cross-training with Water Division staff was also begun. The cross-training will create additional operational options for facility coverage on weekends and evening hours, as well as a larger pool of personnel to respond to emergency situations.

## **LIQUOR STORE**

*Submitted by: Stephen DeLong, Liquor Operations Director*

The fourth annual Taste of Northfield will be held Thursday, June 18, on Bridge Square. This year's event will again include a large Beer and Wine tasting tent, which will feature approximately three-dozen different wines poured by various sales representatives who call upon the Northfield Liquor Store, as well as numerous beers provided by College City Beverage.

A variety of local food vendors will offer their wares; there will also be live music as well as a live and silent auction. Proceeds benefit the NDDC.

Friday, June 12 we will present an in-store Bloody Mary tasting from 4:00 to 8:00 pm. Chris Heimerl, co-founder and proprietor of Spooky Gourmet Hot Sauce will be sampling out the latest product from the family-run company based in Eagan, MN.

We will offer an in-store wine tasting Saturday, June 13 from 2:00 to 5:00 pm. Brent Skjerseth, sales representative from Wine Merchants will pour the following selections from our new sale:

Belle Vallée Pinot Gris (Oregon)  
Kenwood Chardonnay (California)  
Toad Hollow Eriks the Red (California)  
Kenwood Cabernet Sauvignon (California)

cc: Department Managers