

Memorandum

DATE: June 26, 2009
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of June 22-26, 2009

Due to the 4th of July Holiday next weekend there will not be a Friday Memo next Friday July 3, 2009.

The EDA Thursday provided their recommendation of a \$100,000 forgivable loan to Manawa LLC, the owners of the Archer House River Inn, to be used as gap financing for the estimated \$1.25 M Archer House renovation project. The forgivable loan would be a Master Development Loan, which will require council approval before the agreement is finalized. In addition to a significant renovation of the Archer House, a downtown Northfield landmark, this agreement also establishes a partnership between the Archer House and City on the public use of private space. As part of this agreement the ADA compliant restroom facilities will be available to the public daily from 6:00 AM to 12:30 AM. At the EDA meeting, Mr. Brett Reese and Mr. Todd Byhre, representing the Archer House, provided a presentation on the extent of the renovation project and a general assessment of the newly focused business plan of the inn. In July, Council will be asked to consider approval of this agreement.

Again this week Planning Commissioner members and staff from Planning and Community Development Department met with several special focus groups and commissions regarding the Land Development Regulations. From all sides, involvement by the public and board and commission members is very much appreciated and is important in the development of codes that reflect the Comprehensive Plan and are definable to builders and developers. I appreciate the extra time and effort put in by Planning Commissioner members and our Planning and Community Development Staff – Thank you.

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of June 22-26, 2009:

CITY CLERK

Submitted by Deb Little, City Clerk

The schedule for the City Attorney RFP process has been revised due to scheduling conflicts. The revised schedule is as follows:

Action	Date
City Council Approval of RFP	June 15, 2009
Advertisement of RFP begins	June 18, 2009
Deadline for RFP	July 13, 2009 – 4:30 p.m.
Review RFP's	July 20 – 24, 2009
Interviews	August 10 – 14, 2009 *
Update City Council on process	August 17, 2009 *
Consideration of approval of selected firm and award of contract by the City Council	Late August or early September 2009 *
New contract begins	January 1, 2010

* Proposed dates subject to change

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Building

Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Official

This week the beat goes on. The home remodeling projects are steady. We have received two new homes for the week. The large commercial projects at the colleges and Vet Clinic are still absorbing a fair amount of time in the area of inspections and communications.

The plans for the new building at the Northfield Retirement Community arrived. It is a building that will be similar to an assisted living unit; approvals from the Northfield City Council and the USDA are required before the Building Permit can be issued.

The contractor for the CSMR addition made the building permit application this week and indicated they would be in to pick up the permit this week for the \$1.4 million project.

Staff is meeting with an architect on Friday to review the major remodeling project planned for the Jefferson Square Townhomes. We understand the project will include complete exterior and interior removals and reconstruction of all the units. The plans include a new building as a community room, which may require some zoning revisions.

We have been contacted by the architect for the Sibley School addition. We understand the project is beginning soon. The plans are complete but the contractor has not been chosen.

The final information has been received from the Jasnoch crew regarding the Heritage Square Apartments. The final construction permits may be issued for that project in the next week.

Staff continues to review blighted properties in town. We have contacted a number of property owners by letter and some in person to review their plan for removal of blighting conditions. Some items are small and have quick fixes and others will actually require some time and require a conscious plan. We have been contacted by citizens about the two houses that had fires, which are being investigated. The owners cannot do anything with these units until they are released. They have been secured at ground level with plywood and police tape. Staff has been in contact with the Police, the Fire Marshal and the owners. Demolition will begin when the units are released.

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

A meeting was held with representatives from Xcel Energy. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce Xcel's new Community Relations Representative and to explore what Xcel could do to advance numerous initiatives that are being explored in Northfield. These include energy efficiency and energy audits for home and business owners, assisting the City with marketing efforts for the new business and industrial park once plans are more complete, discussion related to placing current overhead electric lines underground and numerous site specific issues. Xcel appears to be more than willing to interact with the City to address issues of local interest.

The more detailed review of the proposals for the business and industrial park continues. The review committee will meet again next Wednesday.

Community Development staff attended several meetings related to the review process of the proposed Land Development Code, (LDC).

Housing

Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager

Staff closed on two first time homebuyer purchases this week. One property that was purchased was a foreclosed property and the other was a townhome constructed a few years ago but had not been purchased. It is very exciting not only to assist the buyers, but to see these homes taken off the market. Both buyers were able to negotiate amazing purchases that would not have been possible in the past few years. The increased purchasing that is currently happening only leads to further stabilization of homes, jobs, and property values in Northfield.

The HRA met Thursday night to discuss the Land Development Code. They were able to discuss, in detail, Article 2. The HRA will meet again on July 9th for their regularly scheduled meeting, but the LDC will be the only item on the agenda. They plan to discuss in detail Article 3. Staff and members of the Planning Commission were on hand to assist the HRA Thursday night and take copious notes of the concerns, suggestions and additions the HRA contributed.

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson

The Planning Commission met this week and reviewed Article 4 of the draft Land Development Code (LDC). Staff also met with several groups to discuss the LDC: the Chamber of Commerce, a group of area builders and developers, the HRA, and the Non-Motorized Transportation Task Force. Staff prepared several staff reports for the July 6th Council meeting, including a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the Sibley Elementary School expansion, and the approval of a 10-unit assisted living facility at the Northfield Retirement Community.

LIBRARY

Submitted by Lynne Young, Library Director

The library's summer reading is off to a great start. During the first week of summer reading, Northfield area children read 241 books, the second week, 250 and this week, 323! As always, the book slips for each book read are hanging around the children's room.

About 600 children have signed up for the summer reading program and another 125 are participating in the teen summer reading program. Prizes this year are gift certificates for local businesses, including popular "treat" places like the Cocoa Bean, Hogan Brothers, Tiny's, Sweet Pea's Loft, Good-bye Blue Monday, the James Gang Coffee House. Other prizes are available from other downtown businesses like Digs and Ragstock. Special thanks to Hogan Brothers, and Good-bye Blue Monday for *donating* these prizes for the youngest readers and to Beef O'Brady's for donating the prizes for the teen reading program. The Quarterback Club donated half of the gift certificates as well.

The Books & Stars program held this week at Central Park featured Amy and Adam. The warm weather and great entertainment brought about 175 people to the park. Next week, look for Wendy's Wiggle Jiggle & Jam at the outdoor pool. It's free swim night with donations to go to the food shelf or the pool scholarship fund.

To see the full Books & Stars schedule as well as pictures from summer reading program activities and pictures of the readers of the week, click on this link: <http://northfieldpubliclibrary.blogspot.com>

Lynne Young met with Delane James, Director of the Buckham Memorial Library in Faribault, to prepare the libraries' Rice County funding request. About 28% of Faribault's checkouts and over 23% of Northfield's are to rural Rice County residents.

The library continues to be very busy this summer – and not just with summer reading. Up to this point in June, the library's circulation has increased 11% over June of 2008.

The upgrade of the library's rest rooms is now complete – new toilets have been installed. We expect fewer plumbing issues with the new toilets.

As a Scout project Crosby King is assisting Judy Code with keeping the library plantings watered.

PUBLIC WORKS

Facilities

Submitted by Bernie Shakal, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor

Facilities continues to work with Johnson Controls to insure that the remainder of the performance contract is completed. Brian Erickson suggested at this week's meeting that a punch list be put together to eliminate the remaining tasks instead of reviewing pages of previous meeting minutes only to find that progress is minimal, hopefully this will be more efficient and will reduce meeting time. Bernie Shakal has contacted a local contractor authorized by Johnson Controls to assist in eliminating some of the tasks that have fallen through the cracks.

A company was hired this week to inspect the sewer line at the Library because there has been a recurring problem over the years that the sewer plugs and backs up quite easily. The inspection is accomplished by sending a camera in the sewer line through a clean out plug to view the inside of the pipe, the pipe appears to be clean, but about ten feet west of the building there appears to be an offset in the pipe, possibly from ground settlement. We will need to hire a contractor to dig it up and have it repaired as soon as possible.

We are repainting Jim Kessler's old office in preparation for Michelle Merxbauer, Housing Manager, to move across the hall to Community Development. It should be finished and available for her to move in by next week.

Streets and Parks

Submitted by TJ Heinrich, Streets & Parks Supervisor

The department had a variety of tasks this past week. Staff performed weekly cleanup and mowing of parks. Preparations were made for the upcoming soccer tournament at Spring Creek Park. Extra cleanup was done and extra trashcans were put at one area. Grant Park saw silt removed and riprap placed around a storm water outlet pipe. Staff also started mowing the non-developed park areas and some outlying areas. The Downtown River Commons had both graffiti and weeds removed. The Downtown sidewalks were painted this week with a new stencil, detailing the prohibition of bike riding on the sidewalks. The Downtown banners were also changed this week to celebrate Historic Northfield. A temporary repair was made at the City Hall Parking lot where a large sinkhole developed. Preparations are underway for the final repair. Three boulevard trees were marked for removal. There was a large dead elm tree removed from the Bridge Square area. Some street repairs were made where water main breaks have occurred. A walking trail in the North part of town was also repaired.

Recreation

Submitted by Jason Eisold, Recreation Manager

The pool saw it's busiest two day stretch since it's opening this past Monday and Tuesday. Over 2000 people visited the pool on these two days combined.

A couple hundred people made their way through the arena on Wednesday to meet Minnesota Wild Players' James Sheppard and Josh Harding.

Water

Submitted by Doug Lien, Water Superintendent

Water Superintendent Doug Lien and Water Technician Jay Hall attended the Suburban Utility Superintendents Association (SUSA) meeting on Wednesday. SUSA invited a representative from Clow Valve Co. to demonstrate the best way to trouble shoot and tear down Clow fire hydrants.

Water Systems Technician Jay Hall and Seasonal Employee Rod Svien flushed the new watermain on West 1st Street between South Linden and Plum Street. The watermain was flushed for about two hours and a bacteria sample was taken and sent to a lab in Janesville to be analyzed. The test results were clear of Bacteria.

Water Systems Technician Jay Hall assisted the residents and excavation crew at 918 West 2nd Street with tapping in a new 1" water service. Their old service had ruptured at the curb stop and needed to be replaced from the street to the home because they had an old lead water service. Jay also connected them with temporary water service from one of their neighbors so they would have water during this excavation period.

Wastewater

Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency conducted their annual inspection of the wastewater treatment facility this week. The process started with a physical inspection of the various processes and equipment that make up the facility. When that was completed the inspector reviewed the last years maintenance records, process operation records, lab data, flow and load information relating to significant industry, and discussed new and pending rules that could impact future operations with staff. A report summarizing the visit and noting any deficiencies found will be compiled and sent to the City in a couple of weeks. There were no deficiencies pointed out during the inspection, so a report indicating full compliance is expected.

cc: Department Managers