

Memorandum

DATE: July 10, 2009
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Board And Commission Memo June 2009

Thank you to the Board and Commissions that have submitted information as a follow-up to their Board and Commission actions and meetings in June. Information for the July memo will be due by July 31, 2009 and posted on Friday August 7, 2009.

Below is information from Board and Commission Chairs on Northfield board and commission items of interest:

Environmental Quality Commission

Submitted by Daniel Jones, Chair

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) has several ongoing projects and tasks related to business currently being considered by the Council and other boards. Chief among these is our review of the Land Development Code (LDC) sections relating to environmental issues. The EQC is holding a special meeting July 16 to discuss the LDC.

The EQC has also tasked its members with reading "The Natural Step for Communities," in order to more effectively participate in the Council's upcoming consideration of implementing a sustainability framework for the City.

The EQC continues to provide support and oversight for several subcommittees composed of Northfield citizens with expertise in specialized issues of interest to the City. These include:

- a Tree Advisory Group to help develop a list of desirable trees and urban tree management practices for Northfield;
- an ad hoc Energy Advisory Task Force, to continue the work of the former Energy Task Force, particularly with regard to applying for energy-related grants for the City;
- the Transit Grassroots Group, which has brought together interested parties to work on local and regional transit issues; and
- the Local Food Advisory Group, which calls on the expertise of citizens concerned about strengthening our local food system to identify and coordinate local food resources and develop information resources for Northfield area residents to enhance awareness and appreciation of locally grown foods.

Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, staff liaison

The HRA delayed their regularly scheduled June meeting by one week to allow a Board member and staff to attend the Green By Design Conference in Minneapolis on June 10 and 11. The conference fee was paid in full by Greater MN Housing Fund because of the Southbridge project the HRA has been working on. Though currently on a holding status due to the economy, research, funding opportunities and planning continue to occur so that when the market is ready, the HRA may proceed rather quickly with the Southbridge project.

Nearly 300 builders, architects, developers, contractors, city officials, and other professionals from across the state attended the Green By Design Conference, which offered topics on green rehab, opportunities and challenges surrounding the foreclosure crisis, energy-efficiency, green materials, sustainable landscaping, and more.

The HRA met on June 18th and received an update from Jenny Larson of Three Rivers on the foreclosure rehab project. The HRA and Three Rivers submitted an application in January for stimulus funds for foreclosure rehab and though we did not receive funding, the two groups decided to utilize other funding sources to purchase and rehab foreclosure properties in Northfield, and then sell to a low/moderate income buyer. The goal is to purchase and begin rehab on two homes in 2009. Jenny Larson reported to the HRA that one house has been purchased and another has a purchase agreement pending. The first house purchased will be used as a model house for several green, energy efficient and healthy home rehab options, including solar power, air exchangers, and flooring, counter-tops and fixtures that are non-toxic. The MN Green Communities standards will be met, and possibly exceeded, in this home. Partners in this project include, but are not limited to, the HRA and Three Rivers, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, ReNew Northfield, Federal Home Loan Bank, MN Pollution Control Agency, Northfield Area Foundation, and the Greater MN Housing Fund.

The HRA is also in the process of reviewing the five Community Development Block Grant programs. These programs include the first time homebuyer program, Manufactured Home Acquisition and Demolition, Manufactured Home Rehab, Rental Rehab, and Single Family Residential Rehab. Currently, these programs are funded solely from CDBG dollars each year. The HRA is prioritizing the programs and looking at other outside sources to help fund them.

Human Rights Commission

Submitted by Commissioner Ameeta Sony

The HRC Public Education Committee will focus on census promotion; the entire commission will help with implementation.

The HRC will request that the Healthy Community Initiative be the fiscal agent for Martin Luther King fundraising.

The HRC discussed culturally competent Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs) and will encourage non-profits in our region with specialty serving Latinos, Chinese, Vietnamese and hearing impaired to become VOADs.

The HRC will staff a table at the International Day of Peace to be held on September 20 and at an upcoming Way Park event on June 21.

Library Board

Submitted by Margit Johnson, Chair

Thanks

Thank you to all of the city council members for taking time to discuss with us one-on-one the library expansion, its funding and the upcoming CIP and budget for 2010. We look forward to following up our individual conversations with a collective discussion about planning for the library expansion at an August work session.

Dave VanWylen of the EDA's Infill and Redevelopment Committee and I are working on a design charrette proposal for the EDA, in hopes that the EDA and Mayor Rossing will spearhead the charrette in the fall 2009 and promote it as an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive context for the library expansion, downtown parking, and other redevelopment in the area in the next 5-25 years.

Lonsdale's library

You are aware that the City of Lonsdale is building a 3,000 square foot library as part of an assisted living facility to serve their community. They have contracted with Three Links to administer the assisted living facility and the Northfield Public Library to provide the professional oversight needed in a library. The library board views this as a win-win: Lonsdale will have a local library, and Northfield gains a bit of relief as our space is seriously overbooked, including a 40% increase in computer use in May 2009 compared to May 2008. Northfield also receives income for administrative assistance, a plus in this economy.

However, the SELCO grant in behalf of Lonsdale for \$39,000 for essential technology was rejected by the MN Department of Education, even after SELCO, Lonsdale and Northfield appealed. So while the facility will be ready by September 2009, the library may not open until January 2010, assuming Lonsdale can raise the necessary funds privately.

Summer, not exactly easy livin' at the library

Kathy Ness, Leesa Wisdorf, Lynne Young and their staff are going flat out this summer with very busy and well attended summer reading programs. An article in the June 27 *Northfield News* featured the volunteer library pages who are integral to helping the staff stay abreast of the throngs of children and the Wednesday evening Books and Stars programs in the parks. Even with reduced staff and shortened library hours due to budget constraints, the staff checked out 2,585 books in 10.5 hours on June 8, the first day of summer. That's almost 250 books, DVDs, etc. per hour!

Mayor's Task Force on Youth Alcohol & Drug Use

Submitted by Susan Sanderson and Joan Janusz, Co-Chairs

The Mayor's Task Force continues to play a key role in a local initiative to raise awareness about prescription drug abuse. This is an important community effort because of the rising concern – both locally and nationally – about the misuse of these medicines by young people. As the flagship portion of this project, a coalition of local partners is working to establish drop boxes in the Northfield and Faribault Police Stations for community members to safely and anonymously drop off unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medicines. The boxes should be in place by mid-September. Community education will begin with a display at the Rice County Fair and continue throughout the next year. Partners in this effort include the Northfield Police Department, the Northfield Hospital, District One Hospital, the Faribault Police Department, the Rice County Chemical Health Coalition, Rice County Public Health, and the Rice County Sheriff's Office.

As discussed last month, members of the Mayor's Task Force continue to lead a court monitoring program for cases involving adults providing alcohol to minors or cases involving the dealing of drugs. Task Force members read Victim Impact Statements at three more court sentencings since the last report.

The Mayor's Task Force published its monthly column in the *Northfield News*. This month's piece focused on the difficult transition faced by many youth in moving from adolescence to young adulthood. Two Task Force members did a follow-up interview on KYMN radio.

Park and Recreation Advisory Board

Submitted by Mr. Rick Vanasek, PRAB Chair

In June the Park and Recreation Advisory Board was relieved from participation in the skateboard plaza by the Mayor and City Council.

The Park and Recreation Advisory Board voted to support the NYBA in the fundraising for the construction of 2 additional ball fields at Sechler Park. There will be one regulation size field and one adaptive field for special needs.

Planning Commission

Submitted by Commissioner Traci Davis

Chair Colby continued work on the Safety Center task force; the task force submitted a recommendation to the City Council this month.

Commissioners Davis and Thomas are working on the subcommittee reviewing master plan proposals for the business park.

The Planning Commission was tasked by the City Council to invite and collect input on the draft Land Development Regulations. Commissioners Davis, Nakasian, and Thomas attended or facilitated board & commission and community meetings to this end. This month's meetings included the PRAB, EQC, EDA, HRA, Chamber of Commerce, Northfield area builders and developers, and representatives from the colleges. Meetings will continue through July. Commissioner Davis put up a project website for feedback on the LDC at <http://ldc.northfieldplan.org> which is being promoted on the City website.

cc: Board & Commission Chairs
Department Managers