

Memorandum

DATE: September 11, 2009
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of September 7 - 11, 2009

Attached are the monthly updates provided by Boards and Commissions for your review.

Many of the departments this week spent time on drafting the 2010 – 2014 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). On September 21, 2009 the Council will be provided a draft copy for review. As identified and discussed at the previous recent work sessions, timelines and the project costs for the Safety Center project and Library expansion project are two priorities the Council will need to identify before finalizing the CIP. Additionally, a "Project Parking Lot" area has been included to identify community wants where the City priority and funding have yet to be determined. This will provide an area to "park" projects until the priority and/or funding can be established. If there were projects or improvements that have been forwarded to you by constituents, this would be the opportunity to bring them forward for Council discussion and possible inclusion in the CIP.

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of September 7-11, 2009:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Inspections

Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Official

The house on Nevada Street that was destroyed by fire is now in the Rice County landfill. We understand there are plans for a new single-family residence to be built on the site.

This week applications for decks and remodel projects have been more numerous than previous weeks. The plan reviews have been more than enough to keep staff occupied. The field inspection requests have not slowed.

The Permit report for August 2009 showed, on the surface, a decline in permit issuance from last year. (420 in 2008 to 266 in 2009) On closer examination it would be noted roofing and siding permits were 150 more in 2008 than 2009. If the August 2006 hailstorm issues are discounted the permit count is 270 for 2008 and 266 for 2009. The value of the permits is harder to equate but the values are estimated at about half this year in compared to 2008.

The department has received a one appeal and one parking variance request for the Rental Board of Appeals. We anticipate a hearing to be held early in October to review these requests.

The rental inspections and renewal applications have continued to be slow. The number of calls for information regarding rental requirements and processes has slightly increased. We anticipate a busy fall inspecting rental properties.

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

The Community Development Director and the Assistant to the Administrator are beginning the work to prepare enforcement user manuals, Hearing Officer User Manuals, citations forms, penalty structures and other materials that will be used by staff as part of the Administrative Penalties system that the City Council has directed to be created. The staff met recently with the City Attorney to outline the materials that need to be created. The City Attorney is working on the preparation of an ordinance that will replace the ordinance that is currently in the rental regulations that will serve to establish the authority for administrative penalties. It is expected that this material and the related ordinance will be on a Council work session agenda late in October.

The final design adjustments to the Riverside Trail construction plan are being finalized. There is real difficulty in finding lighting fixtures that are energy efficient, decorative in design and of the correct height to place along the trail. The design concept is to match the lighting fixtures that are currently installed along Division Street and have the same light efficiency. At this point it is not certain that these lights can be found without mixing and matching component parts, which is expensive and not efficient.

Housing

Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager

After much discussion the HRA and 3 Rivers Community Action have decided to submit a joint application to MN Housing Finance Agency. This grant will be designed to allow for an additional 3-7 foreclosed homes to be purchased and either be demolished or rehabbed and resold to low and moderate income households. The HRA will need to leverage funds from their budget in order to submit a successful application.

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Planning Commission met this week to review a Conditional Use Permit to allow retail sales for an art studio home occupation. The City Council will review this proposal at their meeting on September 21st. The Commission also continued its review of the draft Land Development Code (LDC). The Commission has two larger Articles (Chapters) yet to review, in addition to the definition section of the LDC.

Economic Development

Submitted by Jody T. Gunderson, Economic Development Director

The Economic Development Authority held its regular board meeting on Thursday and formally approved the Master Plan Steering/Technical committee for the proposed business park (s). Over the next 12 months, the EDA's consultants, Hoisington Koegler Group Inc. (HKGi), will conduct meetings with the Public, EDA, Planning Commission, City Council, and Property Owners/Stakeholders to gather information and opinions related to the development of a business park. The role of the Steering/Technical is to assist HKGi prepare the draft Master Plan. The Steering Committee has no authority to approve the Master Plan; that authority rests with the EDA, Planning Commission and City Council.

Rick Estenson will serve as the Chair of the Steering Committee. Council Members Jim Pokorney, Rhonda Pownell, Erica Zweifel will serve on the committee. Other members of the committee include Tracy Davis, Tim Geary, Christopher Sawyer, Neil Lutsky, Mike Berthelsen, Pete Sandberg, Scott Richardson, and Jay Jasnoch. Jody Gunderson, Economic Development Director, Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director, Dan Olson, City Planner, and Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer will serve as technical support.

Tasks To Be Completed
September 2009 to October 2010

1. Predesign
2. Market Analysis
3. Visioning Charrette
- 4A. Concept Alternatives - Site A
- 4B. Concept Alternatives - Site B
4. Concept Alternatives Review
5. Master Plan & Development Standards
6. Implementation Strategies
7. Final Review and Approval

ENGINEERING

1st Street Reconstruction

Submitted by Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer

The subcut was completed on Phase II of the project from Orchard Street to the East cul-de-sac. Crews anticipated finishing placement of the subbase materials on Friday. Curb and gutter is expected to be poured next week.

Crews completed the storm sewer installation from the west cul-de-sac to Madison, which also completes the utility installation for this section. Crews anticipate subcutting this section next and beginning the placement of the subbase materials next week.

Utility construction started on the last block of the project on Thursday with the installation of the temporary water system. Crews anticipated completing the water main construction on Friday. Crews anticipate finishing the sanitary and storm sewers next week.

Sodding and Tree planting is expected to occur on Phase I and II next week. It should be noted that some property owners have requested the removal of additional boulevard trees due to the severe trimming the trees have experienced by the utility companies. These trees will be replaced as part of the project.

TH3/TH19 Modal Integration Study

Submitted by Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer

The consultant worked on minor edits to the application this week. Staff received four more letters of support. As of this time, respondents include: MnDOT, Malt-O-Meal, St. Olaf College, Carleton College, Representative Bly and U.S. Representative Kline, thank-you to all. Council will be asked to pass a resolution of support for the project on Monday September 14, 2009. Pending adoption of this resolution, staff will submit the TIGER grant application on Tuesday, September 15, 2009. In the coming month the consultant will be finalizing the study report for adoption by the council in October.

Spring Creek Road Culvert

Submitted by Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer

A culvert exists on the southeast border of the City along Spring Creek Road. The City took responsibility for replacement of this culvert in an annexation agreement with the township when half of the road right-of-way was brought into City limits. Due to the span of the culvert, it is considered a bridge and thus undergoes regular bridge inspections to monitor its condition. The bridge rating shows the bridge to be "structurally deficient" and is in need of replacement. Originally the City planned to replace this culvert with the

improvement of Spring Creek Road. However, due to the economic downturn and effect on the housing market, development has not been able to support this plan. The City has begun the process to replace this culvert this year because of potential liability issues. This is a simple and straightforward project with an anticipated construction cost less than \$50,000 and identified in this years Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Staff has begun preparing the construction drawings with the help of a consultant. Staff anticipates obtaining quotes later this month and completing construction in the first part of October.

Woodley Street Property Acquisition

Submitted by Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer

The City and County obtained additional permanent and temporary easements to facilitate the construction of the Woodley Street Project. The process began with the City having appraisals completed for all of the affected parcels. The appraisal amounts were used to make offers to the property owners for the use of their property. Most property owners accepted these offers. Five property owners within the City Limits disputed the amounts and thus moved into the eminent domain (condemnation) process. The City obtained the easement rights to the parcels at a hearing that was held prior to construction, which determined public purpose for the project. A commission was appointed to hear arguments from the parties involved and determine the appropriate value the City should pay the property owner. Three of the parcels settled prior to going through a commissioner's hearing. On Wednesday, September 9, 2009 the commission hearing was held on one of the last two parcels. The commission is anticipated to make a determination in the next two weeks.

LIBRARY

Submitted by Leesa Wisdorf, Adult and Children's Services Manager

The Library will resume its 9pm closing time beginning Monday, September 14. The library is open to the public from 9:30am until 9pm Monday through Thursday, 9:30-5:30pm on Friday and 9:30-5:00pm on Saturday. Sunday hours have been discontinued due to budget cuts.

Officials from Rice County, Faribault, Lonsdale and Northfield met on Wednesday to discuss library funding.

Minnesota Book Award author Marya Hornbacher spoke to a full room on September 9th discussing her best selling books "Wasted: a memoir of anorexia and bulimia" and "Madness: a bipolar life".

Thursday, September 17 at 7pm the library will host a book discussion on the Diana Gabaldon Outlander series. Staff member Kathie Schlegel is donating 20 paperback copies of the first Outlander book that includes a chapter from the newest book "An Echo in the Bone". Attendees will have a chance to talk about their favorite books and characters and to win a copy of "Outlander" while enjoying shortbread, tea and scones.

Booker will ride in the Defeat Days Parade on Sunday. The Friends of the Library will walk beside the bookmobile dressed in costumes asking people to become reading animals.

Once again, Marvin and Eileen owners of the Cocoa Bean made a donation to help keep Booker rolling and support children's programs at the Northfield Public Library. For over 8 years the Cocoa Bean has attended every Books & Stars selling their Hawaiian Shaved Ice and every year make a donation in support of the library.

Children's programs will resume next week. The library offers preschool programs for local families Monday through Saturday mornings. Monday, Friday and Saturday is First Steps, Tuesday LapSit, Wednesday Toddler Time, and Thursday Storytimes for 4's and 5's.

PUBLIC WORKS

Facilities

Submitted by Bernie Shakal, Building Maintenance Supervisor

A good portion of this week was devoted to the final task that has to be performed to bring the underground storage tank at the Safety Center into compliance with the MPCA. With the assistance of the Street Department personnel Brian Haugen and Steve Malecha we were able to excavate the ground to expose the top of the tank so that anode bags could be installed to prevent future corrosion of the tank. By doing this we can leave the tank in the ground an additional four years. The Company that performed this work will come back next week to do a test to see if the equipment is performing correctly, if so, we can cover the tank and provide the final report to the MPCA.

Streets and Parks

Submitted by TJ Heinrich, Streets & Parks Supervisor

The week's activities revolved around the Defeat of Jesse James yearly celebration. Listed are just a few things performed by this department; barricade placement, bleacher placement, placement of various articles used by the DJJD committee and cleaning of the sidewalks and streets throughout the Downtown area throughout the weekend. The crew took care of 3 incidents of graffiti. City parks were cleaned up and mowed. Last month saw 2,499 visits to the City compost site.

Water

Submitted by Doug Lien, Water Superintendent

Water Operator Scott Murphy installed temporary water service from various fire hydrants throughout the City to provide water to the food stands on bridge square and to the carnival staff.

The new watermain on the West 1st Street infrastructure project is now in permanent operation from 1st and Linden to 1st and Lincoln Streets. The only section left to be replaced is the last one block section west of 1st and Lincoln to the end of 1st Street.

Jerry Aljets from E.H.Renner Well Co. balanced #3 well motor on Friday morning. Jerry installed washer weights to the top of the motor to balance it out, similar to adding weights to a car wheel. The pump is now ready for service.

Wastewater

Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent

Staff has been experimenting with a new polymer in the primary clarifier. The anionic polymer is designed to group together small, difficult to settle particles in the influent waste stream. This enhances their settling characteristics and improves the efficiency of the system. This new product is less expensive and initial tests indicate that the dose can be lowered to achieve the same results, so there is a potential for savings here as well. Analysis of this new product will continue for the next two months. A change in this part of the operation has the potential to impact sludge handling and biological processes down stream of it, so any modification of process needs to be reviewed over a long period of time before changes are made permanent.

cc: Department Managers