

Memorandum

DATE: September 19, 2008
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, Interim City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of September 15-19, 2008

Next week the Planning Commission will host a Public Meeting at the Northfield Armory Tuesday evening, September 23, 2008 at 7:00 PM to present the final draft of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. This is one opportunity for the Council, Planning Commission, and community to review the highlights of the document and have the review discussion. Kudos go out to the Planning Commission members and supporting City staff who have diligently continued work on completing this document, a long road, hard work, but a very complete and reflective document.

Also next week the City will be posting the Request for Proposal information for the purchase, lease, or development of property for a new municipal liquor store. The tentative schedule will have proposals due November 5, 2008, proposals scored by mid November and presented to Council in December. The RFP will be available on the City’s Web Site and hard copies will be available at City Hall for a fee. Copies will be sent to the mayor and council members for their information at the time of release.

Regarding the recently filed reverse referendum petition and the request for an investigation: The City concern is about public property, specifically a part of the Petition for Referendum that was filed with the City, having been then taken from the City Clerk and removed from her office and from City Hall over her objection, to be returned later in an altered form, all of which occurred after the filing deadline for the Petition.

The City does not know whether these acts constitute violation of any criminal law. The Rice County Attorney’s office will make that determination and decide whether to bring charges against anyone.

This inquiry is not motivated by malice toward anyone but only by concern that public property and public processes be respected and protected. If additional information becomes available it will be forwarded to the Council.

The following is a list of city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of September 15-19, 2008:

Library

Submitted by: Lynne Young, Library Director

Student workers from St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges are back at the library. We are fortunate to have these capable young workers (and really great people) as part of the library team. This is an important way that the colleges contribute to the community.

A new park bench now adorns the library lawn. A gift in memory of Flora Lancaster Smith, the bench provides a welcome, shady resting place.

Thanks to Dave Nelson, the library has a number of new looks – pictures have been hung, furniture put together and book stacks moved.

The Library Board, some library board committees and the library staff all met this week to kick off some new projects. These include collaborative efforts with other community groups and developing a new publicity plan.

Remember that next Thursday, September 25, is the Friends of the Library Spelling Bee. It's a fun event to watch, and there are opportunities to test your skills even if you are not on a team. Join us – 7:00 p.m. at the Grand.

Public Services

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

The Community Development Director and the President of the EDA discussed strategies for annexation and the potential that is emerging for an additional request for annexation south of Highway 19 and west of Armstrong Road

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Zoning Board of Appeals/Planning Commission met this week and approved two variances, and discussed the draft Comprehensive Plan in preparation of the Comp Plan Open House next Tuesday night (7:00 PM at the Armory), and the upcoming public hearing for the Comp Plan.

The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) is attending the State Historic Preservation Conference later this week, which is being held in Northfield this year. The conference is sponsored by the Minnesota Historical Society. There should be about 200 historic preservationists visiting Northfield for the conference.

The Development Review Committee (DRC) met this week to review two Conditional Use Permits (for an addition to St. Peter's Lutheran church and a new preschool on Professional Drive) and the final plans for the Jasnoch's development east of the Target and Cub stores. The City Council is expected to review these plans in October.

Housing

Submitted by Michelle Merxbauer, Housing Manager

The HRA met this week and discussed the covenants for Spring Creek Commons. The HRA got about half-way through the document and will finish this discussion at the board meeting on October 9th. The HRA also approved bids for windows and floor replacements at 517 Washington. That work is expected to be completed this calendar year. Staff also received responses to the RFP sent out for platting, PUD and trunk line feasibility study at Spring Creek Commons. Staff will review the proposals with Engineering and City Planning and make a decision next week. The work will begin immediately on these projects.

Economic Development

Submitted by Jody Gunderson, Economic Development Director

The Director attended a meeting of the Downtown Business owners sponsored by the NDDC. Among the topics discussed was the impact street construction had on business in the Downtown. Additionally, the Director spoke briefly to the business owners about the Downtown RLF and the Micro Grant Program. A few of the business owners spoke about the innovative approaches they have undertaken in order to prosper in Downtown Northfield.

The Northfield City Administrator and EDA Director attended a regular meeting of Greenvale Township to receive the Supervisor's annexation proposal for unincorporated property located in the NW quadrant of the City. Northfield's City staff promised to meet with the Supervisor's again after a more detailed review of the document had been completed.

The EDA Director met with Rice County's Economic Development Director, Deanna Kuennen, and discussed various initiatives affecting Northfield and the County's desire to work closely with the community on matters important to its businesses and residents.

Public Works Operations

Submitted by Brian Erickson, Public Works Operations Engineer

Facilities

Bernie Shakal, Facilities Supervisor

Dave Nelson is finishing up the outside storage shed at the Library with a new coat of paint this week. He also has been busy moving some shelving and assembling a new outdoor bench.

Work continues repairing the walls in the Wellness Center ladies locker room. The new tile is being installed by City staff. Other work continues with Johnson Controls at the NCRC with heating and ventilating adjustments.

Facilities started remodeling the evidence room at the Safety Center this week, originally this project was going to be contracted out, but because of budget issues it was decided to be done internally by Facilities staff.

Bernie has been busy working with Johnson Controls and various contractors at the Ice Arena in order to get the projected completed in time for the hockey season.

Recreation

Jason Eisold, Recreation Manager

The pool has been drained for the winter season and will have the pipes blown out next week.

The arena renovations are moving along. The new dasher boards are installed. Installation continues on the new mechanical equipment (compressors and dehumidification). Painting continues and is close to completion. Thanks to all the volunteers who have donated time and materials to that effort.

Streets and Parks

TJ Heinrichy, Streets & Parks Supervisor

The Street and Parks division completed a variety of tasks this week. Heywood Park playground was finally opened. Mulch was installed and earth work finalized. The neighborhood kids like the new equipment.

Sechler Park has seen some changes recently. Flag football is now being played on the fields. There are four fields painted on the baseball fields. Community Ed and Rec has about 200 kids in the program.

Staff took down the Downtown flower baskets this week. They were looking rather tired and not too colorful. The Downtown banners were also changed out.

A cross walk was installed after being reviewed by the Police department. The new walk is on St Olaf Ave. A catch basin was repaired on Highland Ave., and potholes were repaired around the city. General cleanup and mowing of city parks was accomplished this week. Staff also assisted with some of the Water/5th St reconstruction project.

Transit

Brian Erickson, Public Works Operations Engineer

Transit had another good week as ridership continues to increase. In the next few months the riders should see a new bus on the street as we continue to replace our buses on a regular basis. At this point the oldest bus in the fleet is 7 years old and has over 125,000 miles on it.

Wastewater

Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent

In preparation for the upcoming winter, the heating systems in all the buildings at the wastewater treatment facility were inspected.

Beavers have created a pond in an undeveloped area in the south end of town. The water is over the top of one manhole making it inaccessible for inspection. The Department of Natural Resources was contacted to see what remedies are available. The DNR has no problem with the City destroying the dam to drain the area and encourage the beaver to move. If they persist in rebuilding in the area we can get a permit from the conservation officer to have the animals trapped out. A backhoe was used to destroy the dam. Staff will check the area next week to see if the beaver remain active in the area.

Water

Doug Lien, Water Superintendent

The Water Division received three proposals for architectural services for the construction of a cold storage building at 10353 Hall Avenue. The three proposals received were from Architects Plus, SMSQ Architects and Professional Design Group. Architects Plus was selected as the consultant, and the plans and specifications should be ready in about a month.

Crew Leader Scott Murphy helped Doug Ims from Friedges Inc. drain down the pond systems that are located off of East Woodley Street just south of the Mayflower area. The draining of the ponds will aid in the construction effort to rebuild East Woodley Street.

Scott Murphy took a bacteria sample from the second half of the 12" watermain on the 5th street infrastructure project. The bacteria sample tested negative and the watermain was put into service.

City Mechanic Ryan Keifer serviced four of the Water Division's emergency generators this week. Three of the generator sets are for wells and one is for the Booster Station.

Water Operator, Dean Huschle attended an AWWA planning session in Rochester on Thursday. The meeting was scheduled to plan for the next fall 1-day training school for water operators in the SE district. Generally, there are approximately 50 –75 operators in attendance at these 1-day schools. Training hours are offered for attendance at the schools and are credited towards operator certification.

cc: Department Managers