

Memorandum

DATE: September 25, 2009
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of September 21-25, 2009

This week City staff continued updating and developing the 2010 Proposed Operating Budgets and the 2010 – 2014 Capital Improvement Plan. As indicated below, the Council will continue to review and develop these documents, the cumulative effort of success being adoption and final action by the Council in December 2009.

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of September 21-25, 2009:

CITY CLERK

Submitted by Deb Little, City Clerk

A request for quotations for an electronic document management system called Laserfiche was sent out this week. Some of the benefits of this system include increased: staff productivity & efficiency, public information accessibility, departmental information sharing, City application integration, disaster recovery preparedness and preservation, and compliance with state law on records retention requirements. Studies done on electronic document management systems show that they reduce: lost records, copies and storage space, customer service response time, staff time spent searching for information, and information liability. These same studies show that:

- The major costs in paper filing systems are:
 - 15% on equipment
 - 10% on space
 - 75% salaries
- Professionals spend 5-15 % of their time reading information but up to 50% looking for it. On average:
 - Every document is copied 19 times
 - Percentage of documents that are lost: 7.5%
 - Cost to replace a lost document - \$250 minimum

Members of the Human Rights Commission participated in the Defeat of Jesse James Days Grand Parade. They distributed information promoting the 2010 census. Members also attended the Mexican Independence Day celebration held on Sunday, September 13, 2009. La Vencedora Radio, the Spanish programming arm of KYMN, organized this event. There, they distributed about 190 Spanish Census brochures, along with other promotional materials and made an educational announcement about the census in Spanish to the audience gathered for the event. Immigrants are one of the undercounted groups to which the Commission has been asked to reach out. Most recently members distributed census and Human Rights Commission information during the International Day of Peace celebration held on September 20.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Building

Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Official

The building permit has been issued for the construction of the new KFC. The owner anticipates the footings will be started next week.

The rental inspections are progressing at a pace that is less than desired. Next week we will send a second notice to the landlords whom have not responded.

The downtown area is continuing to be remodeled and upgraded. Work has been completed on a project at Digs and another project at the Archer House is close to completion. We have been told that plans are underway for the old Sweet Lou's to become another restaurant on Division Street.

The upcoming Rental Board of Appeals meeting is being processed, with notices being sent out and Staff reports being prepared.

Construction inspections have been steady this week, with a one to two day backlog. The plan review for residential projects has included another new house. That makes the 8th new home this year. From our estimates, the same number of houses will be built in Northfield this year as last year.

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

Staff is continuing to work on the mechanics of establishing an administrative penalties enforcement system for the City. This background work is nearing completion and should be presented to City Council some time in October.

A request for clarification was sent to the Minnesota Department of Transportation related to the proposed purchase of the remaining property still owned by MnDOT on the Crossing site. MnDOT has outlined in a very general way, three possible techniques that they would consider in resolving the dispute between the City and MnDOT related to the valuation of the property. These various techniques will be discussed with the City Council at the meeting of October 5, 2009.

Economic Development

Jody T. Gunderson, Economic Development Director

The Economic Development Authority held its regular Board meeting on Thursday and awarded a \$20,000 Downtown Revolving Loan to Butler's Inc. (Butler's Steak and Ale). Mr. Butler is the owner and operator of the Contented Cow Pub, and Chapati restaurant in Northfield.

The EDA Board also discussed the individuals that had submitted applications for the vacant Board position. The EDA Executive Committee had met with prospective Board applicants to become better acquainted with their background and reasons for wanting to serve on the EDA Board. The Executive Committee recommended, and the Board agreed, to draft a letter to the Mayor Rossing requesting that she consider all five candidates that had submitted their applications for the vacant EDA seat.

Later that day the EDA Board held a joint meeting with the Master Plan Steering Committee for the proposed business park, which was facilitated by the EDA's consultants Hoisington Koegler Group. The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss the role and expectations of the Master Plan Steering Committee. The following five bullet points explain the role the Master Plan Steering Committee.

1. Steering Committee represents various interests and values of the community and the organizations they represent.
2. Communication link between the planning process and the stakeholders within the community.

3. Provide direction to staff and consultant team on the process and scheduling of the planning effort.
4. Advisory on plan content. Broader public input is essential to developing the master plan and guidelines, however, the steering committee may be asked to offer preliminary input on plan alternatives in preparation for broader public meetings.
5. Where appropriate, participation and involvement in workshops and charrettes throughout the planning process. Committee members may be asked to work with community organizations and businesses in getting the word out about public events related to the planning process.

Housing

Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager

Staff is working with the Finance Director and Ehlers & Assoc. on a possible tax increment financing district for Jefferson Square Townhomes. In 2008, the HRA assisted Dominion Developments with a tax credit application to MN Housing Finance Agency to rehab the townhomes and build a community center for the tenants. Dominion received their requested tax credits and applied again this year for some additional assistance. They now have all the financing needed to start the rehab project and transfer title and ownership. Setting up either a tax abatement or TIF was a financing option that helped to get them funded with MN Housing. Due to the economic change since June 2008, staff is looking more closely at TIF rather than tax abatement. The project will keep the townhomes rentable to low income households and preserve that price point for an additional 20 years.

Staff has been working with a local realtor and looking at foreclosed properties for purchase. The HRA recognizes a need not only for foreclosure acquisition for neighborhood stability and revitalization, but also creating avenues for households that have foreclosed upon to stay in the community. After discussion with local and area social service and rental assistance agencies, the HRA determined that Northfield has a shortage of 4+ bedroom rental units suitable for households with children. The HRA is actively researching 4+ bedroom units for purchase to use as rental property, thus addressing both concerns.

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Zoning Board of Appeals met this week to approve a variance request for a home addition. The Planning Commission also continued their weekly review of the draft Land Development Code (LDC). Staff met with the Labor Management committee to hear a presentation on wellness programs for City employees. This committee will take the ideas suggested at this meeting and discuss at the next meeting which programs are the most feasible to implement first.

ENGINEERING

1st Street Reconstruction

Submitted by Sean Simonson, Engineering Tech Coordinator

Grading crews worked on placing Class V gravel early in the week on Phase III of the project. Concrete crews followed by installing curb and gutter on the project from Orchard Street to Madison Street, including both cul-de-sacs in the Way Park area.

Jirik's Sod Farms was on-site early in the week to sod all of Phase I and a portion of Phase II. The contractor is responsible for watering the sod for the next 30 days; a letter was distributed to all residents who had sod placed on their property, detailing the contractors watering warranty and property owners mowing instructions.

Crews anticipate continuing pouring sidewalks and driveways on both Phases II and III, which include First Street from Orchard Street to Plum Street. Crews also expect to sub-cut and place select granular sand and class V gravel on the last portion of Phase III, which includes First Street from Lincoln Street to St. Olaf College.

Woodley Street / Parmeadow Ponds

Submitted by Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer

Staff has received a number of complaints regarding the levels of algae and weeds in the Parmeadow Ponds. Algae grows when nutrient levels are high in the water and water turnover is low or stagnant. Due to this, it is not uncommon to see higher levels of algae in stormwater ponds adjacent to areas that tend to use fertilizers in the late summer when it typically is dryer. The City has a policy not to treat for these types of outbreaks. Due to the lack of rain this summer many of the stormwater ponds have algae outbreaks right now, which the city does not treat for. However, the middle Parmeadow Pond is at significant higher levels algae growth. These levels are due to the lowering of the ponds to facilitate the construction of the Woodley Street Project. Staff met with Lake Restorations to evaluated the middle pond and will be treating the pond with copper sulfate for the algae and an herbicide for the emergent weeds that were able to take hold while the water level was down. Fall is the best time to treat for the emergent weeds while they are preparing for winter. Results may be noticeable in 2-3 weeks. The cost of the treatment will be \$1,858.

Note: The maintenance policy on stormwater ponds in the past has been to complete mowing/burning of the native buffer grasses. With the adjustment of the stormwater utility rates in 2009 the city has a source of funding to create a program to evaluate and maintain the capacity of the ponds (i.e. dredging). The first step will be to evaluate and prioritize the order in which the ponds are maintained.

TH 19 Overlay

Submitted by Katy Gehler-Hess, City Engineer

Staff was contacted this week by the consulting firm hired by MnDOT District 6 to complete plans for the TH 19 overlay and turn lane improvements to be constructed next year. The project will entail 14 miles of bituminous mill and overlay, curb and sidewalk replacement, addition of right-turn lanes and bypass lanes, and culvert replacement. At this time the project is anticipated to be bid in January 2010. Staff will continue to provide updates once more information is provided. As mentioned at this week's Council Meeting a Public Meeting has been scheduled by MnDOT to discuss the mill and overlay project. The meeting is scheduled for September 30, 2009 at St. Olaf College in the Valhalla Room located in Buntrock Commons from 5 – 7 PM. A 15-minute formal presentation will take place at 5:30 PM.

FINANCE

Submitted by Kathleen McBride, Finance Director

Budget – Tentative Schedule of Budget Review Sessions:

10/05/09 – work session following the regular Council meeting:

- HRA Budget
- CIP Follow-up
- Update on Utility Rate Study

10/12/09 – regular work session:

- Finance (part of the General Fund)
- Debt Service Funds
- Motor Vehicles
- Liquor Operations

10/19/09 – work session following the regular Council meeting:

- Human Resources (part of the General Fund)
- IT operations (part of the General Fund)
- IT Capital Replacement Fund (Internal Service Fund)

- ❑ Insurance Fund (Internal Service Fund)

10/26/06 – special work session:

- ❑ Library (part of the General Fund)
- ❑ Library gift funds (Special Revenue Funds)
- ❑ Police (part of the General Fund)
- ❑ Other Special Revenue Funds – Cable TV, Transit, NCRC and CDBG

11/9/09 – regular work session:

- ❑ Public Works divisions of the General Fund
- ❑ Engineering
- ❑ Utility Enterprise Funds: Storm Water, Garbage, Water and Sewer
- ❑ EDA
- ❑ Master Development District

You will be provided with three-ring binders for your budget documents. Finance will maintain the binders for you and be responsible for adding new documents and updates as they become available. The binders will be kept in the Council workroom so that they are readily accessible to you for review with the scheduled budget review sessions.

PUBLIC WORKS

Arena

Submitted by Jason Eisold, Recreation Manager

The Arena is up and running. There is a video available to view the painting of the ice for the 2009 – 2010 season on the City website Arena page.

<http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/parksandrec/arena>

Facilities

Submitted by Brian Erickson, Public Works Operations Engineer

Staff completed spa cleaning and pool maintenance at the Senior Center this week. Next week the old underground fuel storage tank at the Safety Center will be removed, cleaned, and then disposed.

Streets and Parks

Submitted by TJ Heinrich, Streets & Parks Supervisor

City parks were cleaned this week along with mowing. Two cases of graffiti were cleaned and covered. Banners downtown were changed out and staff completed winterizing the water system at the City pool. The crew assisted the arena staff with glass installation on the east end of the arena. Locate requests were sent in preparation of sign installation on the first phase of the 1st Street reconstruction project. Sechler Park still is quite active due to the fall flag football season and staff continues to keep the fields mowed and lines painted on the fields. The warming house that is near the Sibley school was removed due to the construction at the school.

Water

Submitted by Doug Lien, Water Superintendent

Water Operator Scott Murphy met with Ron's Refrigeration at #4 well. Ron serviced the chiller that cools the well house during hot weather. Ron also ordered a new diaphragm for the shutoff controller.

The automatic water dispenser at the Maintenance Facility stopped working. Water Technician Jay Hall looked at the mechanical part of the dispensing unit and suspected a problem with one of the electrical

circuits. Jay called in an electrician to look at the electronic circuit board and he found a bad timer. A timer has been ordered and will be replaced soon.

Jason Bertrand from the E.H. Wach's Company met with staff to instruct them in the operation and maintenance of the new truck mounted wrench that will operate watermain valves hydraulically. This will prevent back and arm injuries associated with turning these large valves by hand. Staff will be working valves in the months of October and November.

Wastewater

Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent

Staff at the wastewater treatment facility spent the week testing the new SCADA system and developing a punch list of items that the system integrator will need to address before the system is accepted. None of the problems are affecting the overall efficiency of the wastewater treatment facility, but are adding a little staff time to certain tasks that need to be performed. Staff should have a fairly comprehensive list of fixes/modifications that will be required by early next week. The integrator is aware of this and will schedule the work soon after staff has completed testing and contact them.

cc: Department Managers