

Memorandum

DATE: January 16, 2009
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, Interim City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of January 12-16, 2009

Yesterday Governor Pawlenty gave his state of the state address. Although not specific in numbers, the language used by the governor offered no surprise in the Local Aid to Government Funding. Staff is continuing to develop information for the council to review in anticipation of readjusting the 2009 budget to address the further state funding cuts. The review of this information will begin with a worksession presentation on January 26, 2009 comparing the revenues and spending of the city of Northfield with five other comparable cities. We'll continue with the review of revenues and expenditures through the next several months to establish council priorities on future funding, service levels, and revenues that will be used in changes to the 2009 budget and developing the 2010 budget.

One of the recent changes in staffing is Marj Evans-de-Carpio having office hours at City Hall. Ms. Evans-de-Carpio is a long-term City employee whose office was primarily at the Northfield Community Resource Center, NCRC. Although many of the services new community members need are located at the NCRC – school, social services, CAC, etc – many of the new community members also need to be integrated into City services which are centrally located at City Hall. Ms. Evans-de-Carpio move to City Hall allows for improved customer service for those with language barriers and helps provide additional administrative support. Ms. Evans-de-Carpio time will be split between City Hall and the NCRC. Her efforts on taking on this new challenge are appreciated.

Administrator's Office

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of January 12-16, 2009:

IT Department

Submitted by Melissa Reeder

This week I worked with several other communities with on-going fiber projects. We co-wrote a letter to Senator Klobuchar in an effort to educate the legislature on municipal networks. Northfield's Fiber Optic Feasibility Study comes at a perfect time as President-elect Obama looks at infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy.

In the latest issue of Broadband Properties magazine there is a wonderful article about how to make America competitive by building fiber optic networks. The 3-page article is attached to the Friday Memo. It can also be accessed at this link: http://www.bbpmag.com/2008issues/dec08/BBP_Dec08_ObamaLetter.pdf. Many points in this article can be applied to "How to make Northfield competitive". On the second page of this article the author references how fiber will revitalize local communities.

Community Development

Building

Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Inspector

This week the State of Minnesota held its Annual Institute for Building Officials Continuing Education Conference. The staff limited attendance to maintain the inspection requirements and office coverage. The conference offers many opportunities for continuing education on new and existing requirements as it relates to the State and International Building Codes.

The weather has been a challenge for citizens to maintain sidewalks and the calls are still coming in. We are contacting the land or homeowners for corrective action. The weather has also been a challenge for property owners to maintain space heating. We have responded to complaints from tenants in apartments and single-family homes. Additionally, keeping water and sewer services functioning in mobile homes has been a challenge for the unprepared.

We have received a few small commercial remodel permits and a couple of residential basement finish permits. The rental inspections and permitting has been ongoing. We continue to find rental properties that are not licensed. We continue to work with the owners to get compliance. We have been communicating with the City Attorney to follow appropriate protocol for any legal action that may be forthcoming. Some blight issues have been resolved. Others have developed and are in the process of being resolved.

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

Community Development

The Interim City Administrator, Economic Development Director and the Community Development Director attended the Bridgewater Township meeting on January 13th and briefed the Township officials on the annexation investigation that is underway west of Armstrong Road and South of Highway 19. The Interim City Administrator and the Community Development Director will be attending the Greenvale Township meeting on January 20, 2009 in hopes of obtaining the final approval and signatures of the Township officials.

Housing

Progress is being made on the Neighborhood Stabilization Program grant (NSP) application that the City of Northfield HRA is participating in with the City of Faribault and Lonsdale. The NSP program is designed to provide funds to cities to aid in the stabilization of neighborhoods through the approach of purchasing and rehabilitating foreclosed homes. In Northfield there have been 183 homes and dwelling foreclosure since 2006. The NSP grant funds will be targeted to the residential neighborhood west of the Cannon River in the St. Olaf Avenue area and east of the Cannon River in the older part of the residential area of Northfield. The grant application needs to be submitted by January 28, 2009

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Planning Commission met this week to review a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Amendment and variance for the expansion of the Center for Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation at the intersection of Jefferson Road and Jefferson Parkway. The City Council is expected to review this proposal on February 2nd. The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) also met this week and discussed its 2009 goals, including the desire to apply for a grant from the State of Minnesota to assist in public education and tourism efforts relating to historic buildings in Northfield. The Northfield Historical Society would be a partner with the City in the grant. This grant proposal is expected to be on the City Council's agenda for February 2nd. The advisory group providing input to the City on the draft Land Development Code met this week, and reviewed Article 5 of the draft Code. The Advisory Group and Staff will have one more final meeting with the consultant, Wendy Moeller, to provide direction to her on the Code before she submits a

final draft to the City. Staff met with the property owners west of the Northfield Hospital who are requesting annexation of 530 acres of land to discuss the agreement to be signed between them and the City. This agreement is expected to be on the Council's agenda in February.

Public Works Operations

Facilities

Submitted by Bernie Shakal

With the cold weather this week facilities has been busy with heating systems at various facilities within the City, most of the problems were at the NCRC where corrections had to be made in the control system. Johnson Control technicians had to be called in to do these system adjustments, it appears that the initial settings were not set high enough for the cold Minnesota temperatures.

We have received all of the updated pool and spa drain covers and have them installed in the spa, in the process of putting the spa back in service, a leak was detected in the circulating pump which had to be taken apart and repaired, if all goes well, it should be up and running by the weekend. The drain cover upgrade is required due to new State and Federal laws.

Facilities finished applying a new coat of paint to the Mayor/Council Office, we are in the process of setting up the furniture and having IT do some upgrading. Barb Neitzel is assisting in getting the nameplates for the new Mayor and Council Members ready for this office area.

Streets and Parks

TJ Heinrich, Streets & Parks Supervisor

This week the main focus was snow. The recent snow and cold temps took up most of this week. The residential streets saw two plowings and the Downtown saw snow plowing and removal. The last Downtown snow removal was approximately 1300 tons of snow. Citizens might have also noticed the use of sand on streets this week. The reason for the change is the City's salt supplier stopped deliveries. There is a salt shortage in Minnesota and MNDOT is taking first priority on the remainder of the salt supplies. The balance of the week staff was busy with flooding ice rinks, widening sidewalks, and trails.

Water

Submitted by Doug Lien, Water Superintendent

Water Operator Dean Huschle met with Carleton College Professor Mary Savina to discuss projects that her hydrology students could work on for this term. Mary is also active on the Wellhead Protection Committee. Dean and Mary discussed a few options that would help to educate the public on water related topics. The students would work in smaller groups, on subjects such as abandoned wells, abandoned septic tanks, and geothermal systems. The goal is to show how hydrologic studies can serve the public's needs. After the research, the final products could be informational brochures, public presentations, informational web sites, or a combination of those. These products can be used to help reach some of the goals and needs of the Wellhead Protection Committee and the Water Division in public education.

Water Superintendent Doug Lien and Dean Huschle met with 16 St. Olaf students and their professor earlier this week. The students came to the Water Division to get a better knowledge of how the water system worked in Northfield. Items that were covered included well development, water testing and sampling, geology of the area and it's sensitivity to pollution, wellhead protection, and general operations of the Water Division.

Crew Leader Scott Murphy and Water Operator Jay Hall fixed a fire hydrant that was hit by an unknown vehicle on 1/10/09. The hydrant is the type that has the break off flange construction, which can be repaired without digging and replacing the complete hydrant. The repair was completed in two hours.

Waste Water

Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Waste Water Superintendent

Flows and loads are back to normal with schools back in session and the local industries returning to normal operations. Adjustments to the process are being made as systems adapt the increase in flow and load. The wastewater collection system and wastewater treatment processes have shown no ill effects relating to the recent cold weather. All the parameters monitored and tested remain well within the acceptable range of operation. Frozen locks and doors caused by the combination of colder than normal temperatures and high humidity in the process areas has been a significant problem, however.

cc: Department Managers