

Memorandum

DATE: December 31, 2008
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, Interim City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of December 29-31, 2008

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of December 29-31, 2008:

City Clerk's Office

Submitted by: Deb Little, City Clerk

Both Rice County and Dakota County have reviewed rejected absentee ballots. None of the absentee ballots rejected on Election Day by Northfield's absentee ballot board were considered to be "wrongly rejected" or not meeting one of the four criteria for rejection established by the State. Those criteria are as follows:

1. The ballot was rejected because the voter's name and address on the return envelope are not the same as the information provided on the absentee ballot application.
2. The voter's signature on the return envelope is not the genuine signature of the individual who made the application for the ballot and the signature is required under applicable Minnesota law, or the certificate has not been completed as prescribed in the directions for casting an absentee ballot.
3. The voter was not registered and eligible to vote in the precinct or has not included a properly completed voter registration application.
4. The voter had already voted at the election, either in person or by absentee ballot.

Northfield had 1,042 accepted absentee ballots and 55 rejected absentee ballots. Both campaigns will also be reviewing the rejected absentee ballot envelopes.

Building

Submitted by Jim Kessler, Building Inspector

The Building Inspection Department still has some residential inspections occurring and the commercial inspection load is still steady. This week we received 3 permit requests for commercial space remodels and a handful of residential permits. They are currently in the plan review process. The department is currently contacting homeowners and contractors that have not yet scheduled inspections for completed projects. This annual process is time consuming but provides the consumer and the City with completed projects including the final inspection. The homeowners are typically so happy to be done with the project they "forget" to get the final inspection.

The department is also dealing with the rental program. Currently District 2 is in the inspection process. The department is also reviewing the current fee schedule and potential revisions to the Rental Ordinance. We anticipate some changes may be necessary in the ordinance to clarify the ordinance.

We are now dealing with sidewalk snow complaints. We are also dealing with foreclosure properties that have blight and/or snow removal complaints. The banks appear to be more astute in regards to their property than they were a year ago, yet locating the correct contact for a foreclosure is still somewhat of a challenge.

Community Development

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

Community Development

Staff has been working with a design firm and the property owners, (Bob Gill and Ken Prawer) west of Armstrong Road who are exploring interest in annexing property into the City. The area that is being considered for possible annexation is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Economic Development Plan, but may be larger in area than is currently provided for in the annexation agreement between the City and Bridgewater Township.

Housing

Staff will be attending a meeting being held by the Rice County Housing Authority to explore the strategies related to the utilization of Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds that are available through the County to assist with issues associated with housing foreclosure. NSP funds are being made available through the federal government from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Economic Development

Submitted by Jody Gunderson, Economic Development Director

Representatives of the EDA and Northfield City staff met with Mr. Bob Gill and Mr. Ken Prawer to review preliminary concept plans that had been developed for the property they are proposing to annex into the City. Over the last couple of months representatives of the City have reviewed preliminary versions of the concept plan. City staff believes that most of the outstanding issues have been addressed, but requested additional changes be made. The EDA Director has also spent time preparing the EDA's 2008 Annual Report and 2009 Work Plan.

Planning

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

Staff continued to work on writing new text language for the proposed Land Development Code, and also prepared staff reports for Board and Commission meetings in early January. Staff met with Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) officials relating to the proposed Highway #3 access for the Bridgewater Commons development south of Arby's. MnDOT has recently expressed some additional concerns with that access, for which a meeting was arranged to come to agreement on those concerns.

Public Works Operations

Streets and Parks

TJ Heinrich, Streets & Parks Supervisor

This week the Street & Park division worked on City ice rink maintenance and warming house vandalism. The water truck used in rink flooding is down for repair which hampers ice maintenance. The crew continued with boulevard tree trimming. Scheduled maintenance on the City of Northfield signs has begun. The signs are located on Hwy 3 and Hwy 19 at the City entrances. The sign on Hwy 3 was required to be removed a week ago to be repaired after it was vandalized. Tuesday afternoon's snow fall saw the city primary route streets being plowed and continued Wednesday morning until all streets were plowed curb-to-curb. Happy New Year.

cc: Department Managers