

Memorandum

DATE: March 27, 2009
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of March 23-27, 2009

The Safety Center Taskforce toured several public facilities last week, the tour included visits to Farmington, Lakeville, Prior Lake, and New Prague. The group was able to see what other communities had built over the last 5-8 years. At the scheduled meeting of the Taskforce on Thursday evening a follow-up conversation included identifying the features at those facilities that would and would not work well in Northfield. The discussion yesterday also included a presentation by Finance Director Kathleen McBride on basic financing options for a new facility and resulting tax implications. A presentation was also given on ISO Ratings, Fire Service Standards, and the selection of the fire facility affecting the ISO rating and service standards. These presentations will be available on the city web site under the Safety Center Project.

I've attached a resolution passed recently by the Northfield Library Board urging the City and State Representatives to support the expansion of the Northfield Library with funds directed to the State of Minnesota from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Although many of the specifics of these programs identified in the federal legislation have yet to be identified, staff is tracking programs under various state and federal jurisdictions to see where the City can best compete for these funds. These grant programs fall under many different Federal Departments: Agriculture, Energy, Commerce, Homeland Security, and others and also are tracked through various state agencies. We'll continue to track the programs and take advantage of those opportunities as they the specifics of the programs become known.

Below is information on city activities and information provided by the department directors and managers for the week of March 23-27, 2009:

FINANCE

Submitted by Kathleen McBride, Finance Director

2008 Deputy Registrar Review: The City's Motor Vehicle operation received the results of its annual review a short time ago. The overall performance ranking was 1, "above satisfactory." The ranking system is 1, 2 or 3, with 1 being the highest.

Calendar year transactions for 2008 compared to 2007 are shown below:

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>
Long applications	4,382	4,601
Renewals	16,771	16,430
Duplicate Titles	239	302
Total Transactions	<u>21,392</u>	<u>21,333</u>
% of Statewide Transations	0.43%	0.43%

A total of 39 errors were noted for title and registration transactions and account for less than .1% of transactions.

Ehlers Market Update for the week of March 23rd: Included with this week's Administrator's memo is the weekly bond market update from the City's financial advisers.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Submitted by Melissa Reeder

At Monday evening's work session CCG Consulting presented the findings and recommendations for the FTTP (Fiber to the Premise) feasibility study. The survey showed overwhelming support from residents who said they support the idea of the City entering the communications business (81%) and most of them (78%) said they would buy services from a City network. Council was given suggested next steps, the favored being to consider the opportunities available with the federal stimulus grant money.

The new copier has been installed at City Hall. Not only did we get a new copier that will print, fax and scan documents, it reduces our monthly cost. Thanks go out to Kurt Wolf and Barb Neitzel for their research efforts on this project.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Submitted by: Elizabeth Wheeler-Human Resources Director/Risk Manager

The League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) notified the City that the City's comprehensive municipal property and casualty coverage premium will increase from \$186,155 (2008) to \$208,200 for 2009. While several factors including city expenditures, property values, and payrolls, affect the premium increase, the single largest factor for the City of Northfield for 2009 is the 13.6% increase in the claims experience rating. Experience rating is figured based on the frequency and severity of claims. In 2008 LMCIT closed and paid two significantly costly claims which drove the increase in premiums. City staff anticipated this rate hike for 2009 and expects the City will return to a moderate claims experience rating in the future.

The Labor Management Committee continues to meet monthly to work on the goal of finding a way to control the City's incessant health insurance premium increases. On Wednesday a representative from Public Employees Health Insurance Program (PEIP) presented to the committee information on the PEIP Advantage Health Plan available to city, county and school district employees. The Advantage Plan has cost sharing features that will help the employee and the employer better control health care costs while maintaining flexibility in access to doctors and clinics. The State employees (approximately 50,000) are insured under an Advantage Plan and have experienced six years of success controlling premium increases. Next month the PEIP representative will provide cost information for the committee to consider.

LIBRARY

Submitted by Lynne Young, Library Director

The Library Board held their annual retreat on Tuesday, March 17. The retreat offers the Board members more time to get to know each other and delve more deeply into issues. In particular, the Board took time to assess progress towards the goals and objectives in the Library's Long-Range Plan 2008-2012, particularly on the items that involve the Board and the Friends of the Library.

The Friends of the Library have donated three laptop computers to the Library. Two laptops are for check out within the library; these computers can access the library's wireless and are loaded with the Office Suite. We want to thank the Friends and Catholic Charities for the computers and Melissa Reeder and Kurt Wolf for all their hard work in making these computers usable for the public. They worked particularly hard on making wireless printing possible at the library.

The Contemporary Women Writer's book discussion group met last week. The next meeting of the group will be on Geraldine Brooks' *People of the Book* and is scheduled for April 14. New participants are always welcome!

Lynne Young spent part of Wednesday at the State Legislature. Public Library funding is a complex issue. All state library funding is channeled through the Department of Education and goes to regional library systems, which provide delivery and other support for member libraries. Local governments – cities and counties - provide 90+% of operating costs for local public libraries. All public, school and academic libraries in the state also benefit from state funding for Minitex (through Higher Education) that provides resource sharing, cooperative purchasing, the Electronic Library of Minnesota and MnLink, the state-wide library catalog. Northfield area residents make good use of their library and all these extended resources.

Next week (March 30-April 3) is spring break, and the library will hold several special "no-school" programs. Look for magician Tim Freeland on Monday, March 30 at 1:30 p.m. Jim Gerholdt and his "Remarkable Reptiles" will be at the library on Tuesday, March 31 at 1:30, and the St. Olaf Juggling Club will be here at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 2.

Looking for signs of spring? Join the Friends of the Library at their annual meeting on Tuesday, April 7 at 7:00 pm upstairs at the library. After a brief business meeting, Lynn Steiner, author of *Landscaping with Native Plants of Minnesota*, will talk with us about her book and about using native plants in our gardens. This is a great program for gardeners and anyone interested in sustainability and being "green."

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING

Submitted by John Brookins, Building Official

The Building Official, Community Development Director and Deputy State Fire Marshall attended meetings with the design team, building owner and construction manager for the Cannon Valley Vet Clinic to discuss what needed to be completed to obtain a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy. The business offices of the facility are scheduled for occupancy July 1, 2009. The remainder of the building is scheduled for occupancy sometime in October of 2009.

The building permit for the Jasnoch Construction Company 45 unit apartment building should be issued Monday, March 30th.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director

Revisions to the outdoor dining ordinance have been discussed with City Council and the City Attorney has been requested to make changes to the ordinance based on the direction that Council has provided. It is expected that the outdoor dining ordinance amendments will be on City Council agenda for the meeting of either April 6 or April 20.

Staff from the Community Development Department met with the City Engineer and a consultant from TKDA in the effort in preparing the erosion and sedimentation control ordinance that the City is expected to adopt as part of the Phase II EPA requirements that Northfield is now required to adhere to.

The Building Official and the Community Development Director met with representatives from the Cannon Valley Vet Clinic to review the progress of the construction of the project and to ensure a smooth transition into building occupancy by mid summer of 2009.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Jody Gunderson

The EDA held its regular board meeting on Thursday and discussed the progress that has been made toward advancing the EDA's 2009 Work Plan. The Programs, Processes, and Procedures subcommittee met to review and finalize their recommendations to proposed changes to the EDA's small revolving loan program. The subcommittee will submit their recommendations to the EDA's board at the April 9th meeting. The EDA Board also discussed the Minnesota Department of Transportation's long-range investment plan that was presented at the District 6 office in Rochester.

HOUSING

Submitted by Michele Merxbauer, Housing Manager

The HRA met this week to determine how they may assist the Cannon River Community Land Trust with some organizational difficulties they are experiencing. Staff continues to work with First Homes of Rochester and authorized real estate legal council to determine what role, if any, the HRA is able to play.

Staff met with Three Rivers and HRA Chairperson Leota Goodney on Monday and toured 4 foreclosed homes in Northfield. The purpose of this field trip was to determine which foreclosed homes in Northfield would be a good fit for the foreclosure project the HRA and Three Rivers is starting. Two of the homes were in short sale and in relatively good condition, while the other two had been vacant for quite some time and needed considerable repair. Staff will be looking at more houses in the weeks to come and will bring a purchase recommendation to the April HRA meeting.

Staff has received several phone calls over the past 2 weeks inquiring about first time homebuyer assistance, and received one application today. Spring is notoriously a busy time in the Housing office for first time homebuyers and staff does not expect this year to be any different, as housing prices are so low and the market has several options to choose from. The declining economy has not prohibited people from buying homes, instead staff is seeing a different socio-economic class looking for homes in the \$150,000-200,000 price range, whereas two years ago they may have been looking in higher housing price brackets.

PLANNING

Submitted by Dan Olson, City Planner

The Planning Commission met this week and held public hearings for the draft Transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, and for the annexation of the 80th Street East right-of-way in Bridgewater township (this annexation is to bring the entire right-of-way into the city that borders the proposed 528 acre annexation for a business park). The Planning Commission also approved a parking space reduction for the proposed KFC restaurant south of Arby's.

Staff is completing its initial review of the draft Land Development Code (LDC) before it goes to the Land Development Regulation Advisory Group in April. Staff attended a Labor Management meeting on Wednesday to review a proposal for reduced health insurance costs for the City, and also met with the Engineering Department to review a draft Erosion and Sediment Control ordinance.

Public Works Operations

FACILITIES

Bernie Shakal attended a Johnson Controls class to help him use the new building automation system. This System allows for better control of heating and cooling systems.

On Monday, CS Nelson Construction started work at the Liquor Store. This work will correct the existing OSHA deficiency.

STREETS AND PARKS

Submitted by TJ Heinricy, Streets & Parks Supervisor

Spring street sweeping continues and staff has been double sweeping the streets that were seal coated in 2008. Staff continues to fill spring potholes. Chipping of buckthorn from Oddfellows park is near completion. Park cleanup continues. Planning for the 2009 street crack filling and seal coating has begun, and should be ready for bidding in the next couple of weeks. Staff assisted Facility staff with maintenance and repairs.

WATER

Submitted by Dean Huschle, Water Operator

The winning bids on the remodeling of the cold storage area of the Water Division to a meter shop were announced this week. The construction bid was awarded to Northfield Construction Company, Inc. of Northfield. The bid for the heating system was awarded to Cannon CRV of Owatonna. The construction process should begin within the next week or two. Water Division staff have been moving items out of the cold storage area to make room for the remodel project.

Water Operator Jay Hall replaced 21 water meters to the radio-read system at Carleton College this week.

Water Operator Dean Huschle spoke with students this week at Greenvale Park Elementary School. Dean talked to them about how the Northfield water system works, the different jobs that water operators do, the water cycle, and water conservation. He also showed them photos and drawings of the different water facilities. Speaking to students at an early age helps them understand the concept of how water gets to their home and school and how important water is to their lives.

WASTEWATER

Submitted by Glenn Lindroos, Wastewater Superintendent

The Ultraviolet disinfection system rehabilitation project that started several weeks ago was finished up this week. The mercury vapor lamps produce the ultraviolet light which disinfects the wastewater before discharge to the Cannon River. These lamps operate at several thousand volts, and over time the insulation on the wiring degrades and the lamps start shorting out. The units were completely rewired to minimize the number of lamp failures during the upcoming disinfection season. Disinfection is not required from November thru March because bacteria of concern do not survive well in cold water and the recreational use of the receiving waters is also minimal through this period of time. New lamps were installed and new mechanical lifting devices installed where needed. All the lamps have been test fired to assure staff that they will be operational for the April 1 start of the disinfection season.

cc: Department Managers