

Memorandum

DATE: June 4, 2010
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Joel Walinski, City Administrator
RE: Board And Commission Memo May 2010

Thank you to the Board and Commissions that have submitted information as a follow-up to their Board and Commission actions and meetings in May 2010. Information for the June memo will be due by June 28, 2010 and posted on Friday July 2, 2010. Please note: some submittals are edited.

Below is information from Board and Commission Chairs on Northfield board and commission items of interest:

Environmental Quality Commission

Submitted by Daniel Jones, Chair

At the May 2010 meeting of the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC), the Commission set goals for ongoing work in 2010. These include assisting the City and EDA with public education on the GreenStep Cities Program; a series of actions to improve energy efficiency, including recommending adoption of the 2008 Energy Task Force Report; continuing review of the stormwater ordinance, and contributing to the development and review of a multi-jurisdictional planning policy for stream and other natural resource protection. A group of St. Olaf students from EQC member Stephanie Schmidt's class gave a presentation on the status of emerald ash borer in Minnesota and the Northfield area, and the management implications of an EAB infestation in Northfield.

Heritage Preservation Commission

Submitted by Commissioner Pete Carlson

The Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) members discussed the City Council's decision to not grant Way Park the local historic designation. The commission members agreed the process may have had influence on Council's decision. They went on to discuss ways to better present information.

There was an update from Steve Edwins on the IPOD grant project with the Northfield Historical Society: There are 8 stories of 8 different buildings so far. Each story is 6 – 8 minutes long.

City Planner Dan Olson informed the Commission that the group that was to develop 25 Bridge Square has removed their proposal due to lack of financing. A motion was made and passed to rescind the demolition approval.

The commission then discussed the relationship between the Streetscape task force and the HPC. Steve Edwins also conducted a short training session on interpreting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Human Rights Commission

Submitted by Commissioner Corrine Smith

Jayne Hager-Dee spoke with the Human Rights Commission as a representative of the Charter Commission. In its work, the Charter Commission identified a lack of an Ethics Commission for the city. The Charter Commission felt that this might be a role for the Human Rights Commission to take on. After discussion, the HRC expressed concern about taking on this role and whether we have the expertise, skill set, and time for such a responsibility.

Marj Evan-de-Carpio reported that a pre-mediation session regarding the parking violations and towing issue at Viking Terrace had been held and that mediation should go forward in the following week.

The Long Term Planning subcommittee reported on a plan for the coming year. The subcommittee suggested that each month the HRC look at a different chapter in the Building Inclusive Communities document from the Minnesota League of Cities. The goal would be to use this time to educate ourselves about these issues in Northfield to establish directions for the coming year. To assist with this, speakers who are involved with and affected by the specific issue being considered would be invited to speak.

Dick reported on the HRC response to the City Council's request for input on its agenda for the coming year.

Steve Swanson announced that this was his last meeting, having extended his time for a few months past his resignation, awaiting the addition of a new commissioner.

Library Board

Submitted by Margit Johnson, Chair

St. Olaf anthropology students summarized their study of library users and downtown business owners in early May:

- The public library serves as a vital anchor to the downtown community;
- Its historic value is priceless, an icon in the historic downtown;
- The staff's ability to provide services and resources in a limited amount of space is remarkable;
- The library's meeting space is a valuable resource for the community, providing a "neutral" place for groups of all ages and income levels to meet;
- The downtown location supports Northfield's pedestrian orientation.

The students' findings updated and independently reinforced the outcomes of the 2006 Rohlfs and Associates needs assessment study, which has provided the basis for the board's planning for a library expansion on its current site.

Telling Our Story

The 2009 Annual Report, prepared by Director Lynne Young, identifies some of the eye-popping statistics that quantify the essential services that the library provides in the community – 403,578 items checked out in 2009 (13 items for every man, woman and child), an average of 600 people use the library every day, and two-thirds of all Northfield area residents have library cards.

The May 22nd edition of the Northfield News contained a special section on the public library with articles about Lynne Young's 25 years of service as library director, the growing use of technology in the library (written by Adam Gurno), the Friends of the Library's decision to expand to include a Library Foundation for fundraising (Bill North), the use of the library by families with children (Amy Acheson) and home schoolers (Leslie Schultz), the architecture and physical presence of the library (Steve Edwins), the library's centennial celebration (Lynne Young) and the community needs to be addressed in the proposed expansion (Margit Johnson).

Summer at the library

Kathy Ness and the rest of the library staff are gearing up for one of the busiest times of year – summer, when the public library is the *only* library resource available to children of all ages for their reading, DVD and program interests. For more information see <http://northfieldpubliclibrary.blogspot.com/>. The extra staffing required for all of this is provided, in part, by volunteer pages, teens who learn valuable work skills in addition to contributing to the community through their library service. Thank you, pages!

Mayor's Task Force on Youth Alcohol & Drug Use

Submitted by Joan Janusz and Susan Sanderson, Co-Chairs

Highlights of May Activities:

- The Mayor's Task Force is concluding a year-long Positive Community Norms campaign at the Northfield Middle School. Titled "MOST Northfield students," the campaign seeks to correct misperceptions held by many youth at the school that the majority of their peers engage in risky behaviors, like drinking alcohol. It also seeks to support the positive, healthy choices that most students make. The campaign has been very well-received by Northfield Middle School partners. The Mayor's Task Force is leading year-end evaluation efforts to assess future directions of this initiative.
- The Mayor's Task Force continues work on its parent education initiative, titled "Talk, Listen, Connect (TLC)." The group has created a display board that has been set up at numerous middle school and high school family events this spring and will be circulated throughout the community this summer. In addition to the trifold display, there are also packets of resources for parents that are distributed at these events.
- As a part of the TLC initiative, the Mayor's Task Force is planning a series of postcards to parents on important topics related to keeping their children safe and avoiding risk-taking behaviors like alcohol and drug use. The first postcard will be sent out to parents of middle school and high school students in June. It will highlight the importance of parents talking with their children about their views on drug and alcohol use.
- The Mayor's Task Force is again partnering with the Northfield High School Activities Office on the Fall Activity Night. This is a mandatory event for all high school students who participate in fall activities (plus their parents). This year, the keynote speaker will be a Northfield community member who received training on the Pure Performance initiative sponsored by the American Athletic Institute. This presentation will build off the presentation that Dr. John Underwood from the American Athletic Institute gave in Northfield last fall. Pure Performance stresses the negative impact that substance use can have on athletic and school results. The Mayor's Task Force recognizes the wide and diverse audience that the Fall Activity Night reaches and, thus, is excited about this continued partnership and the sustained interest in these topics.
- The Mayor's Task Force partnered with the Northfield Police Department and the Northfield Public Schools on a letter that was sent to all parents of graduating seniors at Northfield High School, the Northfield Area Learning Center, and ARTech. The letter congratulated the families on their child's graduation and reminded them of the importance of assuring that graduation celebrations did not involve young people drinking alcohol. This marks the fourth year of collaborating with these partners on this graduation mailing.
- Ellen Unruh from Rice County Public Health and the Four Corners Partnership presented at the Mayor's Task Force's May meeting. Ellen shared information on the work underway in Rice County to reduce tobacco use, particularly among young people.
- Dr. Charles Reznikoff (addiction medicine specialist at Northfield Hospital) will attend the June 7th Mayor's Task Force meeting. Dr. Reznikoff will discuss his work at the Northfield Hospital's Opiate Agonist Therapy Clinic and his perspective on substances use issues in the community.

Mayor's Youth Council

Submitted by Katherine Peterson, Chair

In May, the Mayor's Youth Council (MYC) spent considerable time reviewing the applications that were submitted to be on next year's MYC. We received over 50 applicants (a new record!) for only 10 available slots. We were sorry that there were not more positions available, as there were so many outstanding applicants.

Following the lengthy review process, we sent our list of recommended new members to the City Council for approval. After their confirmation, we had a welcome meeting with all of the new members, returning members, and graduating members.

The MYC also began the process of finalizing the "100 Best Communities for Young People" application, which was submitted to America's Promise prior to the June 1 deadline.

Finally, for the third consecutive year, the MYC participated in planting flowers along the pedestrian bridge in downtown Northfield with the Northfield Garden Club and Northfield in Bloom.

cc: Board & Commission Chairs
Department Managers