

12TH WARD UPDATE

Council Member Sandy Colvin Roy

September 2003

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Council Approves Funding for Phase II of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program

The City Council provided certainty for the future of NRP by approving a dedicated source of funds to support the program through 2009. The discussion of funding for NRP took place within a larger debate about the program's performance and how it could be made stronger, as well as the reduced financial circumstances of the city.

Although the NRP Board is independent, the city will be held responsible for requirements set in state law, including that 52.5% of NRP funds be spent on housing. Phase I of NRP did not meet this goal, so to ensure we reach it by 2009 the city has asked for a yearly report on NRP spending to track performance toward the housing goal. Having solid information on where NRP organizations are spending money will improve accountability to Minneapolis residents and help to ensure that we reach the statutory housing goal by the end of the program.

Another concern has been more than \$60 million in allocated but unspent program funds, which could be spent on other projects. Gov. Pawlenty's office suggested to many who called him this winter with concerns over the cuts to Local Government Aid (for our police, fire and public works) that this unspent neighborhood money should be used to replace LGA. While it would violate the NRP law to do that, we can't just let the money sit there. Neighborhoods will now have more flexibility to examine unspent funding allocations after three years to see if the strategy is still a priority, then change the planned use if it's not.

NRP will continue to be available for citizens who are working to strengthen our city at the neighborhood level, which is good news! With the drastically reduced funding available for NRP due to state tax law changes and a market down-turn, combined with the huge cuts to LGA for our basic services, this future was not at all sure.

Mayor's Annual Budget Address

Budget season was kicked off by Mayor Rybak on August 14th. The Mayor's speech outlined his proposal for a 2004 budget which would stay beneath our self-imposed 8% cap for city, parks and libraries combined. I was pleased to hear the commitment to public safety. The Police and Fire Departments will remain at their current level, not be forced to make further cuts.

I do see some areas of deep concern. Final figures by the state delivered \$1.8 million less than they told us to expect back in June. That cut came at the expense of Public Works, which already received deep cuts last year. As the Mayor said, "We need to find other permanent revenue for our infrastructure and that will take time, so we need a bridge to get to that time. There was a bridge in my proposal, but the final \$1.8 million LGA cut blew up the bridge!"

To make our huge investments in roads and bridges last longer, we must have money to do maintenance. With the number of financial challenges facing the city, we are underinvesting in maintenance by \$14 million a year. I worry about the long-term consequences if we continue to neglect our infrastructure.

Finally, the cost of property tax concerns me. Last year, we adopted a policy to limit levy increases to 8%, including the park and library board levies. The reality is that the 2001 tax cut on business properties causes levy increases to be amplified on homeowners. I will look hard at any property tax increase because I know it is important to residents of the 12th Ward, especially those on a fixed or declining income. Council budget hearings begin September 9th in the Ways & Means Committee.

Board May Close Schools in Longfellow

Mpls School Board members are considering dramatic changes to the river schools. The proposals under consideration recommend constructing a new school at Hiawatha and potentially closing Howe and Sanford Schools. **No construction is recommended at the Dowling site.**

The decision is on a fast track. Community input will be taken at two community meetings and a public hearing, details below. For more information, contact Erin Glynn at 612-668-0218.

Staff Recommendation to the School Board

Sept. 9 - 4 p.m. – School headquarters, 807 NE Broadway
This meeting will be broadcast live on Channel 15 and replayed on Wed. at 5:30 p.m., Sat. at 7 p.m. and Tue. at 5:30 p.m.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS WHERE RESIDENTS CAN VOTE ON THEIR PREFERRED OPTION

Sept. 10 – 5:30 p.m. -- Sullivan K-8 School, 3100 East 28th St.

Sept 15– 5:30 p.m. -- South High School, 3131 19th Ave. S

Public Hearing before the School Board

Sept. 16– 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. -- 807 NE Broadway

Scheduled School Board Vote

Sept. 30 – 4 p.m. -- 807 NE Broadway

COMMUNITY EVENTS

West River Commons “Re-Ground Breaking”

September 9th, 4-7 p.m.
4610 East Lake Street

Autumn Daze Festival

St. Helena Catholic Church, 3204 East 43rd Street
Friday, September 12th, 6-10 p.m. – Parade @ 10 a.m.
Saturday, September 13th, 10:30 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 14th, 10:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

MONTHLY NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

SENA Board Meeting

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 4000 28th Avenue S
September 8th, 7:00 p.m.
For more information, visit www.standish-ericsson.org

NENA Town Meeting

Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 E 50th Street
September 11th, 7:00 p.m.

LCC Board Meeting

Holy Trinity Church
September 18th, 7:00 p.m.
For more information, visit www.longfellow.org

NENA Board Meeting

3000 East 50th Street
September 25, 7:00 p.m.
For more information, visit www.nokomiseast.org

Attention Minneapolis History Buffs

The Mill City Museum grand opening is set for Saturday, September 13th from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Minnesota Historical Society will be hosting the grand opening of this museum built within the ruins of the Washburn “A” Mill – a National Historic Landmark that was once the centerpiece of the world’s flour milling industry. The museum brings to life the story of how nature, people, and machines came together to make Minneapolis a city of national importance. For more information, contact the Minnesota Historical Society at 612-41-7555.

Minnesota Orchestra Performing Free Concert

The Minnesota Orchestra will be performing a free concert at the Lake Harriet Bandshell on Sunday, September 14th at 4 p.m. Osmo Vanska, the Orchestra’s new music director, will conduct the performance.

City hires back 32 firefighters

Recently, Chief Forte highlighted for the Public Safety & Regulatory Services Committee his plans to bring back 32 laid-off firefighters before the end of the year. Adherence to the Fire Department’s business plan, plus new grants, provided enough money to bring back the firefighters. The Mayor’s proposed budget is sufficient to keep the firefighters into the future, but Chief Forte wants to be sure that he will not have to lay the folks off again. I have assured him that I support his recommended budget for the Fire Department.

A legitimate question is “What changed that you had to lay-off these firefighters, only to bring them back now?” First, the size of the LGA cuts forced the city to take quick action, which gave little time for departments to find other revenue. Time has given the Chief opportunity to explore other ways to bring money into the department. Strict controls on overtime, savings from military leave and retirements reduced costs to the department. The Chief also pursued other funds, including grant money, which made more revenue available to hire firefighters. The result is a fire department that is better prepared to serve the city and its residents.

Improved 3rd Avenue Opens

A major thoroughfare in downtown has reopened eight weeks ahead of schedule. The 3rd Avenue project was a complete reconstruction that already has completed phases stretching from the Convention Center to the Hennepin County Government Center. As with the previous phases, planters offer green space in the center of the street. I have no doubt the hard work I did to keep at least four lanes of traffic on the length of 3rd Avenue will prove to be a wise decision for the city. Overall, the project improves 3rd Avenue, the appearance of downtown, and the traffic flow for anyone crossing downtown.

Nokomis Healthy Seniors Seeking Volunteers

If you are looking for an easy way to help out in the community, considering volunteering to drive area seniors to medical and dental appointments. You can commit as many or few hours as you like. The trips are arranged a week in advance by Nokomis Healthy Seniors staff and the furthest trip is to 50th and France. This is a great opportunity to help your neighbors stay in the neighborhood.

If you are interested or want more information, call Nokomis Healthy Seniors (612-729-5499) and ask for Becky.

NRP Policy Board Elections Set for November 20th

Individuals interested in being a representative or alternate on the 2004 NRP Policy Board must file their forms by noon on Friday, September 19th. Filing forms are available at: <http://www.nrp.org>. You can also pick up materials at the League of Women Voters Minneapolis office (Young Quinlan Building, 81 S. Ninth Street, Suite 335). Candidates seeking a term on the Policy Board must be a resident of the appropriate neighborhood category (i.e. protection, revitalization, redirection) for a minimum of 30 days prior to the election and be at least 21 years old when their term of office begins in January, 2004.

Your Suggestions Please!

The “12th Ward Update” is a work in progress. Please let me know what topics interest you or how this publication can be more useful.