

12TH WARD UPDATE

Council Member Sandy Colvin Roy

February 2004

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City Recycling Contract

Awarding a contract for processing and selling the materials set out by citizens for recycling has stirred up a considerable amount of interest in the community. It has been great to see the high level of interest in recycling, how it will be done with the next contract and who will do it. Unfortunately, the excitement has brought with it repetition of some misinformation and created some misunderstandings that I will try to clear up.

The city received three responses to the Request for Proposals. Recycling America Alliance (Waste Management and Peltz paper); Eureka (a non-profit that has collected in St Paul since last April, and processed recyclables with their partner, Weyerhaeuser); and BFI (with Pioneer Paper of north Minneapolis.) All three have sites in the city, with Eureka's just now being completed. All three responding teams will share with the city the money made through selling the commodities (paper, aluminum, glass, etc). Our RFP requires that no more than .5% of the material collected can end up as a "residual" in a landfill or the burner. The rest must be re-used, which should please those who want the time they spend washing and sorting to have a benefit for our environment. We have met this standard for many years. All three pay their employees a living wage and offer domestic partner benefits.

With these elements as given, I am looking for the best deal for us, the rate payers. Although we have received money for our recyclables for years while many cities didn't, that revenue still does not cover the costs of recycling. Money is tight now. If we don't get a good deal we could lose public support for continuing our excellent recycling program.

Minneapolis has been a national leader in recycling for 25 years and we have high standards, both for protecting our environment and getting a good deal for the taxpayer. It is through decisions made by city policy makers (my predecessors) and through the work of for-profit corporations like BFI and WMI (both of whom began recycling in our area very early on) that we have such a robust market for recyclable materials. Eureka is a welcome addition to Minneapolis, having already served in St. Paul. Without this well developed market, the materials we now reclaim and sell might well go to landfills, defeating our purpose of wise resource use. Although the contract has not yet been awarded, I am confident that we will be well served.

Traffic along Hiawatha

Many calls to my office over the past month have been questions and complaints about traffic flow along Hiawatha Avenue and on its cross-streets. Many callers believe LRT is the culprit behind the traffic delays. In some cases, that is true, but there are other causes too. Three things are happening: First, signal lights occasionally malfunction. This type of problem is usually isolated to one intersection and is not LRT related. Second, signal coordination has been out of order since January 28th because Excel damaged a trunk cable for computerized traffic signals. Public Works is hanging overhead wires and signals will be functioning, but the timing will be off until the replacement wires are in place. Excel will be paying the city for our expense. Finally, LRT testing has caused some glitches in the traffic signal system. Metro Transit and city Public Works are working together daily on light timing to get traffic signals, traffic, and LRT to work together efficiently.

Citizen Survey Results

Results from the second Resident Satisfaction Survey were released in January. The survey was done by random sample, resulting in 800 telephone interviews. Nonenglish speaking households were contacted by fluent native speakers. Here are some interesting results from the survey.

- 89% of surveyed residents rated Minneapolis as a very good or good place to live.
- 53% of surveyed residents who contacted the City did so via the internet, a 35% increase from 2001.
- Garbage collection won the hard-fought competition for the city service with the highest satisfaction rating with 91% of surveyed residents expressing satisfaction. Fire service came in second with 90%.

Full survey results and executive summary are available at: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/results-oriented-minneapolis/>

EVENTS & NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

Howe School Winter Carnival

Howe School, 3733 43rd Avenue South
February 7th, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Games, food, magician, face painting and more

MAC Meeting on New Noise Contour Maps

Commission Chambers, Lindbergh Terminal
February 16th, 1 p.m.

38th Street Public Workshop

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 4000 28th Ave. S
February 17th, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Lake Street Reconstruction Public Meeting

East Lake Library, 2727 East Lake Street
February 23rd, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

MONTHLY NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

SENA Board Meeting

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 4000 28th Ave. S
February 9th, 7:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.standish-ericsson.org

NENA Town Meeting

Minnehaha United Methodist Church
February 12th, 7:00 p.m.

LCC Board Meeting

Longfellow Park
February 19th, 7:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.longfellow.org

NENA Board Meeting

3000 East 50th Street
February 26th, 7:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.nokomiseast.org

Open Appointments

- Heritage Preservation Commission
Deadline, February 9th
- Ethical Practices Board
Deadline, February 6th
- Charter Commission (2 Vacancies)

For more information, visit:
<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/boards-and-commissions/open/>

Improving Downtown Traffic

The recent Resident Satisfaction Survey done for Minneapolis cited traffic as one the reasons people do not visit downtown. City leaders know traffic can be a problem and pushed Public Works, Regulatory Services, and other city departments to find ways to improve the traffic situation. A lot of great work has been done in the past two years, focused on both private and public projects. Here are some of the highlights from 2003.

- Travel Time Savings - 34,656 vehicle-hours of less downtown delay during rush hours in 2003 versus 2002
- Increased emphasis on keeping at least two-lanes open at all times to increase traffic flow.
- Very seldom were lanes closed during rush hour periods.
- The City's 3rd Avenue Reconstruction Project was completed 8 weeks ahead of schedule.
- Traffic Control Agents provided special event traffic control and enforced illegally stopping or parking violators to enhance the traffic flow.
- 75% increase in the number of subscribers to the City's email "Traffic Alerts" (1,164 current subscribers)
- Increased information on the TMO/City's web site: <http://laneuse.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/>
- Since February 2003 over 534,000 web site hits averaging about 49,000 monthly hits.

A Sustainable City

In November I mentioned some environmentally friendly initiatives within the Public Works Department, including the use of alternative fuels and electricity saving traffic signals. Those achievements are part of a larger, citywide, effort to embrace sustainable practices in the areas of water quality, transportation, neighborhoods, and operations. A report to the City Council highlights the Riverside coal-to-gas conversion, formation of a water quality monitoring task force, and a focused effort to reduce the amount of storm water runoff in the city.

A complete list of highlights is available at http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2004-meetings/20040130/docs/09_Sustainability_Initiatives1-20-04.pdf

Get E-Alert for Snow Emergencies

If you have not already done so, you may want to sign up for a snow emergency e-mail alert by clicking on: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/snow/esubscribe.asp>. It is simple to sign-up for the e-mail alert and it is one of the easiest ways to save yourself from a ticket, or worse, a tow!