12TH WARD UPDATE

Minneapolis City Council Member Sandy Colvin Roy March 2006

Sign up for the monthly Update by sending an e-mail to: Sandra.Colvin.Roy@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

City Council Vote Moves Citywide Wireless Broadband Closer to Reality

The City's effort to establish a citywide WiFi (Wireless Fidelity) internet broadband system has generated lively debate. It has been great to see the resident interest in this topic and I believe WiFi will have tremendous benefits for the city.

This issue started in 2003 when the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board considered installing wireless internet in city parks. Approximately a year later the City Council directed city staff to pursue a citywide WiFi system. As an organization, the city was interested WiFi because it could improve our public safety communications and give our employees a chance to do more work in the field. It also had the potential to provide residents with a number of tangible benefits, including lower cost broadband internet service and a way to give internet access to people who have, for socio-economic or geographic reasons, limited access to the internet (commonly referred to as the digital divide).

Once the City Council made the decision to pursue a citywide WiFi system, the biggest decision became the method for building the system and providing the service to customers. The three available options were a 100% private system, a 100% public system, or a combination of the two. Members of the project team met with future customers, technology experts, and researched the global broadband market to gather as much information as possible on similar broadband networks. It was ultimately determined that the Public/Private partnership business model was best model for Minneapolis for a number of reasons:

- Allows the City to maintain full ownership of the existing and expanded fiber optic infrastructure; a valuable City asset.
- No financial risk to the City. The capital investment and issues related to construction, start up, systems operations and maintenance, and rapidly evolving wireless technology refresh/replacement will be borne by the private partner.
- The City will require a comprehensive Community Benefits Agreement.
- Because the city is a primary customer, network coverage must reach every point in the City at a level that will satisfy our demanding public safety standards.
- The City will not have to be involved in the marketing, sales, revenue generation and 7x24x365 customer service required to sustain this business.

Since Minneapolis made this decision, WiFi efforts in other cities such as Chicago and Houston have followed our lead. This model allows the city to meet our public safety and city operational goals, offer a lower cost broadband option for residents, and through a Community Benefits Agreement, make the biggest step in the history of the city toward bridging the digital divide, all with no financial risk to the city.

The community benefits agreement is a very important portion of this discussion. We will negotiate an agreement that will set the terms for what the community will receive in exchange for the contract. That could include a variety of items designed to provide benefit above and beyond the actual service. For example, Philadelphia negotiated a revenue sharing agreement to fund a program that purchases computers for low income students.

The two RFP finalists, Earthlink and U.S. Internet, will be hosting pilot projects in north Minneapolis and the Cedar Riverside area. At the conclusion of the pilot project, the city will negotiate with one or both of the providers and bring the final contract to the City Council for approval. If everything goes well, we will sign an agreement by the end of the year and service to residents will be available in late 2007.

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EVENTS & SPECIAL MEETINGS

38th St. Station/Purina Taskforce Task Force
March 8, 6:30 p.m.
Hiawatha School Park
Public & Private Roles and Goals

Housing & Home Improvement Fair
March 11, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
South High School, 3131 19th Avenue S

Mississippi River Gorge Stewards Open House & Eagles in the River Gorge with Duke Addicks
Tuesday, March 28, 6:30 - 8:00pm
St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Community
1500 Franklin Avenue SE, Minneapolis
(2 blocks east of the Mississippi River)

City Assessor's Annual Neighborhood Meeting - Understand Your MPLS Property Taxes
Tuesday, April 4 – 4 to 6:30 p.m.
Pearl Park, 414 E Diamond Lake Road

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

SENA Board Meeting
1830 East 42nd St. **(NOTE NEW LOCATION)**
March 13, 7:00 p.m.
For more information, visit www.standish-ericsson.org

LCC Board Meeting
Longfellow Park, 3435 36th Ave. S
March 16, 7:00 p.m.
For more information, visit www.longfellow.org

NENA Board Meeting
3000 East 50th Street
March 30, 7:00 p.m.
For more information, visit www.nokomiseast.org

BOARD AND COMMISSION OPENINGS

- Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC) (closes 3/17/2006)
- Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) (closes 3/24/2006)
- Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People With Disabilities (closes 3/24/06)
- Minneapolis Planning Commission (closes 3/22/06)

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

Buy a Tree for $15

The City of Minneapolis is making a thousand trees available to its residents, to help repair some of the damage done by storms and Dutch elm disease in 2005. Residents can order one tree per address, and folks can choose from four varieties: Autumn Spire Maple, Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry, Bicolor Oak, and Black Hills Spruce.

Ordering a tree:
The trees cost $15 each, and are each about 6 feet high with a 1 ¼-inch trunk. The thousand trees will be made available on a first come, first served basis, and trees should be ordered by April 15. Visit the Tree Trust site at www.treetrust.org to order a tree.

Picking up your tree:
After submitting an order form, residents will need to pick up their tree on one of two pick-up dates: May 13, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Xcel Energy Riverside Plant, 3100 Marshall Street NE May 20, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Jenny Lind School, 900 50th Avenue N

Learn to care for your trees:
Tree Trust is providing free workshops, which are available for residents to learn more about how to plant a tree the right way, how to care for it, and how to be your tree's first responder! Learn how to identify insect and disease problems, hazardous trees, and other tree health issues. The workshop dates are: April 4, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Northeast Bank, 77 NE Broadway April 8, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Nokomis Community Center, 2401 East Minnehaha Parkway

Research has proven that trees are a valuable investment. They increase property values, improve air quality, lower heating and cooling costs, control storm water, and make our cities better places to live.

For more information, contact Lorrie Stromme with the City of Minneapolis at 612-673-2003, or call Mimi Hottinger with Tree Trust at 651-644-5800.

Top 311 Complaints

311 is useful for residents because it gives them a single point of contact for all non-emergency information with the city. It also helps the city improve service by consolidating complaint intake to a single location. This gives us a chance to track complaints and measure how well we are doing in solving resident's top concerns. Here are the top six complaints from January 4 to February 19.

1. Sidewalk snow and ice complaint – 1,555
2. Abandoned Vehicle – 764
3. Environmental Nuisance Complaint – 331
4. Residential Conditions Complaint – 295
5. Parking Violation – 281
6. Street Light Trouble - 190