



.....[March].....

Creative Thinking uses our 911 Operators Most Effectively

Having an adequate response to 911 calls has been a concern of mine for several years. Overall, our 911 pick-up time is excellent and our operators do a great job but every once in a while I hear from someone who does not get a quick answer, or worse yet, doesn't get an answer before they hang up. Although they usually get a call back within a short time, it's frightening to have an emergency and not be able to reach help.

After hearing these stories from residents, I sat in with a 911 operator to learn more about their job. Learning that we sometimes had peak periods with not enough operators, I advocated for adding more operators to the budget; as of last year we have 4 new operators. This by itself was not enough to eliminate the problem so I went further, discussing the problem with the staff to see what could be done.

With assistance from a creative information systems staffer, the 911 managers finally were able to analyze the data from the call center and document those "peak call loads". They worked with a labor/management committee to create two new 10 hour shifts for some operators, providing an overlap at times of high call volume. This is a great example of solving a problem with creativity and collaboration, not more money.

Another improvement coming soon will be a simple phone message to let someone who is put on hold know that they have reached 911, approximately when the call can be answered (average is expected to be less than 60 seconds), and to not hang up because that will delay their getting through. If a caller does not immediately reach a live operator, I want them at least to know that they have reached 911 and their call will be answered.

Is the City of Minneapolis Considering a Ban on Happy Hour?

I have been getting a lot of calls and inquiries from constituents on one issue. Not the economy, changes to the Minneapolis Charter, or road salt - they're calling and writing because they've heard that the City is going to "ban happy hour." I agree that a proposed ban on happy hour could be a serious issue, or an issue to make some folks seriously unhappy, but there are no such proposals currently before the City Council.

Here are the facts. Recently, a citizen advisory group called the "Public Health Advisory Committee" (PHAC) went to the Health, Energy and Environment (HEE) Committee of the Council with the request that the City Council form a work group to study the problem of "binge drinking" and possible ways to address the problem.

To see the request go to: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2008-meetings/20081212/docs/Preventing-Binge-Drinking-RCA.pdf>.

The only issue on the table right now is whether the City should allow a work group to be created to examine the issue of binge drinking. The HEE committee heard this request in December, 2008 but then postponed the matter. It is true that the citizen advisory group,

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[LCC](#)

[NENA](#)

[SENA](#)

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Spring?

That's right! Spring is coming. Don't forget to "spring ahead" on Sunday

PHAC, wants the city to consider measures which include:

- Opposing legislation that would lower the drinking age
- Limit/prohibit the sale of 40 ounce malt liquor
- Banning or limiting practices by licensees that contribute to binge drinking, such as: Serving more than one drink to one person at one time, encouraging or permitting drinking games, and selling multiple or unlimited drinks for a fixed price

These are the recommendations for study with no explicit proposals. When the issue gets back on the committee agenda, they will vote on whether to recommend forming a task force and if they think it's a good idea, then the question will go to the full City Council to approve or reject it. Even if the HEE and the Council decide to support the creation of a work group, we don't have to suggest that the group look at these particular measures at all.

My thoughts are that a more effective method of stopping binge drinking would be education of young drinkers about the severe dangers of over drinking (think of the deaths in our state in recent years, of kids turning 21 who surely never thought that they could die from the celebration); education of the servers about what to watch for when selling liquor; and education of the bar's managers that they are responsible for over serving.

Right now we are not even having that debate. The only question before the HEE Committee is whether or not to allow a work group to look at this issue.

What is your opinion? Do you think a work group should be formed to look at the issue of binge drinking? Let me know: Sandra.colvin.roy@ci.minneapolis.mn.us



Graffiti Micro-grants Producing Great Results

The Solid Waste and Recycling department recently presented results from the 2008 graffiti micro-grant program and they were inspiring! The department gave out \$136,000 dollars in grants, none for more than \$10,000, for the purpose of graffiti reduction, abatement or eradication and grantees invested even more - \$364,936 – for half a million dollars to fight graffiti. More than a thousand volunteers donated their time to share information with their community, form quick removal teams to get it down quickly, or create murals and plant living trellises to stop graffiti from happening in the first.

The Longfellow Community Council (LCC) was responsible for two murals and there has not been any graffiti at those sites since the murals were completed. The Standish Ericsson Neighborhood Association (SENA) helped to install 10 murals. They have had very little trouble with graffiti at those sites. Graffiti there has been reduced by 98%.

A wonderful by-product of this project is that it provided an opportunity for neighbors to connect with one another, sometimes across generations. In SENA's evaluation of the project they wrote, "Community murals are unique in creating a visibly inviting and public project. Those who may not otherwise feel included or interested in community activities for the first time get involved."

March 8. Move your clock ahead one hour.

The first official day of Spring is March 20.

March Calendar

Nokomis Library Open House

Hennepin County Library and the Nokomis Library Advisory Team will hold an Open House to show the plans for the renovation of the library on Thursday, March 12. The Open House will be 6-8:00 pm, at the library (34th Ave and 51st St).

Save the Date - Housing Fair, March 28

The South Minneapolis Housing and Home Improvement Fair will be Saturday, March 28, 10am - 3 pm, at South High School. There will be seminars, a keynote by Star Tribune columnist John Ewolt on "25 ways to save more and spend less in 2009."

Seward-Longfellow Heritage Preservation Survey Meeting

March 24, Becketwood Chapel, 4300 West River Parkway, 6:30 pm
City staff and local historic preservation consultants are looking for resident input on buildings or locations to consider for preservation activities. Contact Jack Byers with questions- 612-673-2634