

12th Ward news

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[February]

Proposed Charter Changes; Park Board at Risk

Three changes to the Minneapolis City Charter have been proposed. Our city is a national leader on many fronts with the current form of government, notably the excellence of our parks, but some on the Council and in the media are suggesting that the system is too messy.

I have a strong reaction to the suggestion that we eliminate the elected Park Board: No. I do not want the same people who are charged with economic development to also be charged with preserving public access to our permanent natural resources – even if I am one of those people. I do not want anyone to feel forced to choose between more tax base and the precious open space that makes our city so special.

The other two changes do not provoke as strong a feeling. We now have a strong council – weak mayor system, much modified during Mayor Fraser’s term in office to give the Mayor the power to appoint department heads with approval by the Council. Now the idea is to substitute a city manager for the current city coordinator position and have all department heads report to that appointed person. The effect would be to consolidate a lot of power in one unelected bureaucrat, with no indication that this would save money.

The final change would eliminate the Board of Estimate and Taxation, a group made up of the Mayor, two Council members, two citywide elected members and one Park Board representative. This board sets the maximum levy (tax) for the following year, then the Council must decide on a budget and finally adopt the levy. The main argument for keeping it is that it gives the Park Board some power to affect what taxes the city raises, since they do not have the power to raise taxes on their own. The main argument against it is that the City Council has to actually vote to levy the taxes each year and that there would be clearer accountability if there wasn’t another little-known body involved.

Please let me know what you think of any or all three of these ideas. The Council will vote this Friday, February 6th, on whether to begin the process of putting these on the ballot for this fall’s election.

Howe School Site Proposals to be Revealed

In December, Minneapolis Public School Board received three proposals for re-using the Howe School site that has been shuttered for three years. Two of the proposals would save and re-use the school building. One proposal is for single family housing, while the others would create senior housing. At this point I do not know which of the proposals are financially viable but MPS should have completed their review by the time of the community meeting on **February 25th at the CWA Hall, 3521 E Lake St, starting at**

Abandoned Vehicles

Crime Prevention

Utility Billing

Housing Inspections

Metro Transit

Report Graffiti

Animal Control

USI Wireless

LCC

NENA

SENA

Tax Facts

Out of every dollar in property taxes, the city gets 41 cents, schools receive 28 cents, and the county receives 26 cents.

The city’s share of property taxes is \$183 million. Police, Fire and Public Safety alone will cost nearly \$200 million in 2009.

Since 2002, the City has decreased its’ debt burden

6:30 pm. Interested community members will not want to miss this meeting which may be our only chance to comment on a preference.

Do you have an Opinion on What to Cut in this Year's Budget?

Like other Minnesota communities, the City of Minneapolis faces significant financial challenges in large part due to State finances. Governor Tim Pawlenty cut \$13.1 million from the expected December payment, leaving City officials no choice but to pay the bills from the reserve fund. [To put that into context, \$13 million is the equivalent of paying for 130 police officers or 150 firefighters.] The reserve fund has been an important feature of our city's financial stability, something all of the bonds rating agencies watch closely, so we are searching for ways to replenish it. We must also revamp the 2009 budget in preparation for even more LGA cuts from the State [Gov. recommended \$16.8 million.]

The City is asking residents, businesses, and City employees to share their priorities and ideas for making these significant cuts. In 2003, the last time the state cut local aid to Minneapolis, the City made major structural reforms that put us in much stronger financial footing to deal with the current situation. However, the magnitude of the cuts needed this time means that changes or reductions to some City services are unavoidable. Minneapolis already receives \$36 million less in annual State aid than it did five years ago.

Two community meetings sponsored by Mayor Rybak will give citizens the chance to air their priorities for budget revisions and share ideas for saving money or cutting services.

Monday, Feb. 9 - 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Martin Luther King Park Rec. Center , 4055 Nicollet Ave. S.

Tuesday, Feb. 10 - 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Eastside Neighborhood Services, 1700 Second St. N.E.

Mayor Rybak will propose a new 2009 budget to the City Council in mid- to late-February. The City Council will consider the new budget following a typical budget deliberation process and is expected to vote to approve a new budget in early March.

For more information on the Minneapolis budget, go to:
www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/2009budget.



Watch for your Noise Mitigation Notice from MAC

As a result of the settlement between the City and the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), many homes in the 12th Ward are entitled to airport noise mitigation measures or reimbursement for measures already taken. When you are notified by letter that you are eligible for this program, it is important to respond if you wish to participate. Participation is voluntary and failure to return the card that is included with the letter will be considered a decision not to participate.

To check whether your home is in the settlement area, visit MAC's interactive map:
<http://maps.macnoise.com/interactive/settlement.html>.

To learn more about this settlement, and products available for sound proofing, visit
www.macnoise.com.

by \$ 86.5 million.

Low and mid-value residential properties are shouldering more of the property tax burden than they did a decade ago due to changes by the State Legislature which lowered taxes for commercial, industrial and high-value properties.

Minneapolis by the Numbers

Minneapolis is the 7th most wired city according to Forbes magazine. Seattle, WA was #1.

MSN Travel names Minneapolis as one of the 15 Coolest Cities and they're not talking about the weather. They site a vibrant arts and music scene and "stunning architecture" for the designation.

Target Center is number #16 in the United States and #26 worldwide for ticket sales last year with 349,000 tickets sold.

February 2009 Calendar

Seward-Longfellow Heritage Preservation Survey Community Meeting
Feb 3 6-7:30 pm Matthews Park, 2318 29th Ave S City staff and local historic preservation consultants are looking for resident input on buildings or locations to consider for preservation activities. First of 3 meetings
www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/hpc.landmarks for details.

RiverLake Greenway Final Public Meeting
Feb 4 6:30-8:30 pm Roosevelt High School Results of work by a citizen's advisory committee will be shown to the community. Comments received will help determine the final design for the bicycle/pedestrian route stretching from Lake Calhoun to the Mississippi River. For more information about the project, visit:
<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/public-works/cip/riverlake>

Bike Share Program Public Meetings
Feb 4 7 pm Calhoun Square Atrium Lake St & Hennepin Ave
Feb 10 7 pm Coffman Memorial Union, The Whole, U of M Main Campus
Feb 12 5:30 pm Downtown Central Library, Pohlad Hall 300 Nicollet Mall
Learn about a proposal for a bicycle sharing program in Minneapolis. Visit
www.niceridemn.com for more about public bicycle sharing systems.

Budget Cuts Community Meetings
Feb 9 7-8:30 pm Martin Luther King Park Rec Ctr 4055 Nicollet Ave
Feb 10 7-8:30 pm Eastside Neighborhood Services 1700 Second St. NE

Valentine's Day Ball – Kids aged 3-7, \$5
Feb 11 5:30-7 pm Lake Hiawatha Park (27th Ave S & E. 44th St)

“Lake Hiawatha Heart Warmer” Valentine's Day Event
Feb 14 Noon-3 pm Lk Hiawatha Park & Golf Course Possible activities: cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, sleigh rides, live music, outdoor BBQ, ice skating, carnival games & more. To volunteer or offer services, contact Jessica Hill at Jessica.hill@yahoo.com or Brett Lambert at waterechoes@yahoo.com

MPD Citizens' Academy Application Deadline
Feb 14 Spring Citizens' Academy Tuesday evenings, March 17th-May 19th, 6-9 p.m. in North Mpls. Learn from investigators, trainers, precinct commanders and officers about police procedure, what it is like to be a police officer. Topics include use of force, investigations, K-9 Unit, 911 Operations, Emergency Response Unit and more.
www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/police/about/citizens-academy.asp.

2009 Bands for Band! Benefit for Sanford, Anne Sullivan & Seward School Bands
Feb 21 3-9 pm Eagles Club 2507 25th St East Enjoy a variety of music performed by local bands, 4 student bands and many special guests. Food, silent auction, raffle and more! Tickets \$10 adults, \$5 children 6 & older, \$25 families. www.iloveband.org for more information.

Bureau of Mines/Camp Coldwater Springs Open House
Feb 23 5-9 pm VA Hospital 1st Floor Auditorium An opportunity to provide comment on planning for the reuse and restoration of federal property formally occupied by the

Metro Blooms Raingarden Workshops

To register call 612-554-9261 or visit
www.metroblooms.org

Workshops (Part A)

March 18-June 4.
Learn to design and install raingardens, use native plants and shrubs and eco-friendly lawn care.
\$10 per household (limit 2 members).

Workshops (Part B)

March 18-June 20.
Small-group workshops to help Part A attendees plan their raingardens. \$10 per household (limit 2 members)



Last Day to Skate at Sibley Park

Weather permitting, Feb 16 is the last day for ice skating at Sibley Park. Did you know ice skates can be used for free? Call 370-4954 for park hours.

Bureau of Mines. National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff will be available to provide information concerning the Draft Environmental Impact Statement preferred alternative, historical preservation and interpretation, and to gather input to guide planning for the future reuse and restoration of the site.

Howe School Building Sale Proposals

Feb 25 6:30-8:30 pm CWA Hall, 3521 E Lake St. A chance to learn about the proposals received by Mpls School District for the re-use of the Howe school site.