

Memorandum

DATE: January 12, 2007
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Al Roder, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of January 8 – 12, 2007

Here is a list of city activities for the week of January 8 – 12, 2007:

Administration

The City Council retreat is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17th and Thursday, January 18th from 5:00–10:00 p.m. both evenings. The retreat will be held in Room 142 of the Buntrock Commons at St. Olaf College. Dinner will be provided both nights. Don Salverda will be facilitating the retreat again this year, and we anticipate it to be a positive experience for everyone again this year.

City Hall will be closed on Monday, January 15th in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

City Clerk

Staff has been working on liquor license renewals. All liquor licenses expire on March 31, 2007. The City Clerk and Police Chief met to review the renewal process. Improvements have been made to the renewal application that will now require the applicant to complete only one City application rather than the two or three that have been required in the past. These applications contained essentially the same information and were very repetitive. Staff has also tried to clarify what is needed from each applicant depending on the type of license held. The entire renewal process takes approximately 45-60 days. Letters were sent to license holders on Friday, January 12, 2007 notifying them of the requirements for renewal. License holders have until February 12 to return all completed documents. The Police Department will complete background investigations on each license holder once all completed data is received. Council approval is scheduled for March 5. Once licenses are approved by the City Council, they will be sent to the State for review, approval and issuance. The Department of Public Safety Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement Division is the State regulatory agency for liquor licenses.

Transit service will operate on a normal schedule on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Monday, January 15, 2007.

Motor Vehicle will be closed on Monday, January 15, 2007 in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Information Technology

Full Time contracted helpdesk position from PC Solutions has been terminated. Melissa Reeder negotiating with PC Solutions on a contract to support the network servers and firewall systems.

Library

Library staff continued NIMS (National Incident Management System) training with Gary Smith.

Federal tax forms are now available at the library. State forms are not yet available. For the second year, staff have placed the give-away forms in the lobby for easy access to the public. The books containing the photocopy masters will be kept upstairs where staff is available to assist the public. More and more people are using the federal and state web sites to obtain tax forms and information. Of course the library computers are also a good source for accessing these government resources.

Library board packets went out for the January 16 board meeting. The Mayor's Youth Council will be making a brief presentation to the Board that evening and Melissa Reeder, City IT Director, will also have an opportunity to meet the board.

In 2006 the library handled almost exactly the same number of interlibrary loans as in 2005 – more than 37,000. However, in 2006 we loaned more to other libraries and borrowed fewer for our patrons. However, Northfield continues to be a net borrower, receiving 2,928 more items from other libraries than we loaned.

The contemporary women writer's book discussion group met at the library this week to discuss *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson. Joan Ennis is the facilitator for this book group.

All programs have resumed following the holiday hiatus, including Adventure Girls and the Chess Club that are led by college volunteers.

The weeding of the adult fiction collection, including all the genres, should be completed within a few days.

With the new budget year staff have begun to place orders for new materials!

The Northfield Public Library was one of 16 Minnesota libraries to benefit from a Minnesota Humanities Commission grant to provide a special "I Love Minnesota Storytime." Jim Postier will be at the library on Saturday, February 10 at 3:30 p.m. Jim Postier is an illustrator from Rochester who has published two books: *Goose Moon* and *Best Little Wingman*. We're looking forward to a great story time.

Finance

Recommended Charter Language Change: Staff will meet with the Charter Commission next Tuesday to discuss a change to the section of the charter dealing with the submission of the budget and capital improvement program. Staff brought this matter up with Council during one of the budget work sessions last fall. Excerpts from the report to the Charter Commission follow:

Summary: Section 9.5 of the Charter is titled "Submission of the Budget and the Capital Improvement Program." The text of the section then uses the term "capital improvement budget." I find this confusing. A capital improvement program is well understood to be a planning document. It does not constitute a budget (authorization to spend) nor does it necessarily authorize projects. Authorization to proceed with a project / incur costs would typically be given through separate Council action – either through the adoption of an annual budget or a project budget or by ordering a project.

Staff wishes to discuss alternative language to clarify this section of the Charter.

Background: Staff researched other cities' charter language. Sections from charters of the cities of Mankato, Virginia, Mounds View and Hutchison are attached. Each of these charters includes reference to a capital program. Many more cities didn't have any mention of a capital program in their charters – Albert Lea, St. Louis Park, Duluth, Minnetonka, Plymouth, Robbinsdale, St. Cloud and Winona.

In checking with colleagues who have worked in other cities, there are examples where the multi-year capital improvement program (CIP) constituted a capital budget. Brian O'Connell, Community Development Director, worked for the City of Ames, Iowa. Their system was so well tuned that approval of the CIP also meant approval of capital projects budgets. This is not the case here. We may never want it to be.

Recommendation: Staff recommends the Charter Commission consider the following change:

The Administrator shall submit to the council no later than its first regular meeting in September the required annual budget and a five-year capital improvement ~~budget program~~. The budget shall be in the form prescribed by ordinance and other law. The capital improvement ~~budget program~~ shall include the estimated project costs, proposed financing and the annual cost of operating and maintaining the facilities to be constructed or acquired. Capital budgets may be adopted as part of the budget or through individual project budgets. ~~The budgets shall be in the form prescribed by ordinance and other law.~~

Former Council Member Dixon Bond reviewed the report and supported the change.

Presentation of the CIP to the Planning Commission: The Finance Director and Community Development Director presented the 2007 – 2011 CIP to the Planning Commission on January 9th.

Toronto's Long-Term Fiscal Plan: Attached is an article from the December issue of Government Finance Review (Government Finance Officers Association) that details how Toronto initiated a process / plan to address their financial issues. The article provides a good background and framework for this type of planning. This is also one of the Council's goals.

Community Development

Building Inspections

Building Inspection staff attended the Minnesota Building Code Officials winter code conference this week. Hail permits have reduced to very few per week. There still remains a huge back log in inspections activities for newly constructed roofs in the City. Outside inspections staff remains in service to assist the city in this large inspection back log.

Community Development

Staff spent time with the City Attorney working on proposed changes to the Rental Code of the City. This will be on City Council agenda of January 22, 2007.

Time has been spent this week working on the land initiative with members of the EDA Land Subcommittee. A presentation was made to the Planning Commission about the 2007-2011 Capital Improvements Program. The Commission had many good questions and was greatly interested in the CIP process.

Economic Development

The EDA meeting for 1/11/07 was canceled. The next EDA meeting will be on Thursday, January 25th. Staff and the Fiber Optics Committee liaison met with a representative from the Institute for Self Reliance to learn more about how other communities are addressing and pursuing fiber optics as an economic development tool. Many communities are exploring fiber optics, and these communities may start sharing information through an on-line Listserv in the near future.

The EDA's Land Committee met to start analyzing the costs associated with the third business/industrial park initiative. Staff will now be completing a financial analysis and researching development costs in other surrounding communities.

Staff met with the Chamber of Commerce and NDDC representatives to discuss the preparation of a Retail Marketing Strategy. The EDA is providing funding in 2007 to these two organizations to work together to complete the strategy (Strategy 2B in the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan).

Housing

Staff worked with legal council to finalize a purchase agreement between the HRA and Cannon River Community Land Trust for the three remaining twin homes at the Maple Hills subdivision. The CLT is working on securing their financing and plans to purchase, market and sell the homes themselves. The goal is still to have affordable housing for low and moderate-income families or individuals.

The HRA met this week and heard from two different parties interested in affordable housing options in Northfield. One project includes affordable one bedroom apartments located downtown, and the other project is a proposal for a dual effort of home building and learning a trade. The HRA found both projects interesting and plans to discuss them further in relation to the recent completed housing study.

Planning

The Planning Commission met this week and recommended approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a licensed daycare facility at 700 Division Street (Village Drug building). The Council will review this proposal on January 22nd. As you are aware, Bob Will, Chair of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), spoke at this week's City Council meeting. Bob wanted to let the Council know that he is available to give any Council members a tour of the historic downtown district. You may contact him at 645-4532 if you are interested. Also, he stated that the building design guideline book that the HPC uses in their review of project plans can be found on the City's website if you are interested in reviewing the book.

City Council members may have seen a large banner installed along Highway #19 (near Kwik Trip) on an empty railroad car. Staff has been attempting to speak with the organization that installed the banner on December 29th. Last Wednesday, Staff was finally able to speak with a representative from Progressive Rail, who installed the banner. Their position is that since the banner is located on railroad property, according to State Statute they are not subject to the 24 day Northfield Sign Code limitation that such temporary signs must adhere to. Staff is working with our land use attorney, Roger Knutson, to verify if that is indeed the case.

City Staff has recently become aware that many of the Council members will be at the National League of Cities conference in Washington DC from March 10th - 14th. Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan meetings that were scheduled for the City Council for March 13th-14th will be rescheduled for another date. Staff will let the Council know when those dates are chosen.

Public Services

Staff facilitated the January Park and Recreation Advisory Board meeting on Tuesday. Items of discussion included work on the PRAB 2006 Work Plan Review and development of the 2007 PRAB Work Plan. This item will be presented to the Council in Feb/March of 2007. The PRAB also began work on developing a request for proposal for a Park System Master Plan, which was identified in the 2007-2011 Capital Improvement Program. Once the RFP is developed staff will be requesting Council authorization to begin this project.

Water Division:

Jay Hall met with Jo Strapko from Northern Water Works Supply on 1/12/07. This meeting was held to set up the computer system that will read the radio read metering systems information and transfer it from the hand held meter reader to the computer system for computerized billing. This will be done for the first time on or about the 1st of February. Prior to this the water division staff and city hall staff had to manually enter 750 radio read meter readings every month to complete the billing cycle. This should produce some efficiencies for city employees on performing ongoing monthly duties.

Staff replaced many large water meters this week. One 3" and one 4" meter at the Retirement Center, one 3" at 1000 Cannon Valley Dr., One 3" and one 1 1/2" at the NCRC, one 3" at Bridge Water School, one 3" at Greenvale School, one 1 1/2" at Econofoods, one 1 1/2" at Northfield Printing, one 1 1/2" at the Ice Arena, one 1 1/2" at St. Dominic's Church, and eight smaller meters in the commercial areas.

The water superintendent met with the city attorney on some changes to the water ordinance on 1/10/07. These last changes will be added to the water meter presentation that will be going to the council workshop in February.

Engineering Division:

Staff received the draft Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan for review and comment. The plan should answer questions regarding sewer capacity and needed collection system improvements needed in the future. Once reviewed by staff and necessary revisions made, the final draft will be presented to council for acceptance.

Staff worked with WSB, Water Resources Division, to finalize the terms of the professional services agreement to complete the Surface Water Management Update. The agreement will be presented to council for action at the Jan. 22 meeting.

Staff worked with WSB, Transportation Division, to finalize the terms of the professional services agreement for the Woodley Street (CSAH 28) project. The agreement will be presented to council for action at the Jan. 22 meeting.

Engineering and Public Works staff met to discuss road and utility conditions along Municipal State Aid (MSA) routes. Based on the discussions, needed rehabilitation projects were identified and prioritized. Staff will be seeking direction from council on use of MSA funds for the projects identified at the Jan. 22 council meeting.

Announcements for a Neighborhood Meeting on the proposed 5th Street Reconstruction Project concerning residents on Winona, Oak, and Union Street were sent out. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday January 24, 2007 at 7:00 PM at City Hall. Items for discussion will include street design, parking, and project scheduling.

Wastewater Division:

Wastewater staff met with Engineering, Water, and the Public Services Director to review upcoming street projects. The purpose of the meeting was to review upcoming MSA street projects and review the condition of utilities under these roads to make sure the utilities that are in need of repair get scheduled for repair as part of the projects. From a wastewater standpoint this involves reviewing the television footage of these segments of line that we have on file, and in one case going out and televising two blocks that we didn't have existing footage of.

Streets/Parks/Facilities:

Work continued on completing the Hr Office Suite on the 2nd Floor at City Hall. Working with IT support, staff installed necessary communication wiring. Painting, carpeting, and doors were completed and Friday afternoon the upstairs hallway was full as moving day had begun.

Staff began flooding outdoor rinks again to build ice for skating, operations will continue as long as weather permits.

Encroachment and illegal dumping letters were sent out to several residents. These notices were sent in response to a complaints being received by the Public Services Department on people piling yard waste on City easement property and others using City property for personal use. The current Department practice is for staff to respond to these events only when receiving a complaint.

Staff met with the finance committee of the Northfield Senior's Association to review annual expenditures and 2007 rent increases for the Northfield Community Resource Center and Wellness Center. As per the lease agreements, rent payments are based on annual operating expenses of the facility.

cc: Department Managers