

Memorandum

DATE: September 1, 2006
TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Al Roder, City Administrator
RE: Friday Memo for the week of August 28 – September 1, 2006

Here is a list of city activities for the week of August 28 – September 1, 2006:

City Clerk

- Staff hosted an election judge training provided by Rice County in Northfield. The training was held at the NCRC. The training was very valuable, and will help to make the election process run smoothly for both the primary and general elections.

Finance

Budget

- Staff presented additional information on the preliminary General Fund budget and tax levy at the work session on Monday. Council directed staff to trim the tax levy by an amount so that a homeowner would not see a double-digit increase in their tax bill for next year. A complete breakdown of the revised levy and budget reductions made is detailed in the September 11th packet.
- Staff will develop future budget discussions focusing on the capital improvements program and their relationship to operating budgets as well as one on utility operations. Because of the very compressed (inadequate) budget preparation schedule this year, internal review by the management team of the other operating budgets and capital program will continue.

Note: the budget notebooks distributed last week have a collating error within the General Fund section. With the additional reduction in expenditures, staff will update this entire section and distribute to you next week. In addition, the Master Development District Fund's revenues were missing. Replacement pages will be provided for this, too. I apologize for the oversights.

Update – check scam

- There have been two more series of letters and checks sent out. Staff and bank officials have fielded numerous calls from recipients questioning the legitimacy of the checks. Staff has learned recently that a fourth mailing has gone out. Fortunately for the City, the checks accompanying the letter are not drawn on the City's account. The scam artists have apparently targeted a private company.

Library Gift

- The Finance and Library Directors met with First National Bank officials to discuss the buy-back of bank stock gifted to the Library in the early 70's. The bank is changing to an S corporation for income tax purposes. Because the City is tax-exempt, it may not hold stock under the new bank corporate structure. The purpose of the discussion was to price the stock.

Community Development

Community Development

- Staff has continued to spend time on the post approval issues associated with Gleason 3rd Addition
- The Department is in the early stages of hiring a new Housing Manager. To date, 15 individuals have applied for the position of Housing Manger for the City.
- Staff, along with the Police Chief, met with rental property owners and non-rental property owners at a meeting with Council Member Malecha to identify possible strategies to address rental property concerns in the Ward 4.
- Continued effort has been devoted to finding areas of possible budget cuts of budget shifts to assist in meeting the Council directive for the general fund portion of the budget

Economic Development

- Staff met with a representative from the State Department of Employment and Economic Development to discuss the "bio-zones" that the state is creating. The MN Department of Employment and Economic Development will be accepting applications for the Biotechnology and Health Science Industry Zone (Bioscience Zone) Program. The purpose of the Biotechnology and Health Science Industry Zone (Bioscience Zone) Program is to keep or enhance jobs in the area, increase the future tax base, or to expand or create new economic development through the growth of new bioscience businesses and organizations. At this time, the program is not funded and no tax credits are available for distribution to companies. If at some future date the MN Legislature appropriates funds for Bioscience Zone tax credits, newly designated zones and zones designated in 2004 would be eligible to access the tax credits for business development activities.
- Staff continues to work with a subcommittee of the EDA on the implementation of the economic development plan. Focus is being placed on "Opportunity 1 - Diversifying the Economic Base."
- The first draft TIF policy was discussed by the EDA at their last meeting. Since then, Staff has been working to revise the policy, and draft a Tax Abatement policy. These will be discussed in more detail at a future EDA meeting and then forwarded to Council for Council approval

Housing

- The September meeting of the HRA will focus on "lessons learned" from the Maple Hills project and alternative ways to construct neighborhoods with affordable housing components. In preparation for the meeting, Staff met with representatives from Three Rivers Community Action (3 Rivers). 3 Rivers had an instrumental roll in the Maple Hills project, and has done numerous affordable housing projects throughout southern Minnesota. They will compile case studies of other developments so that the HRA can learn more about different ways to pursue affordable housing projects.
- Staff is working with two Housing Assistance Program applicants. Income verification is underway.
- Due to last weeks storms, Staff has been working with contractors to get estimates for repairing the homes owned by the HRA. The remaining homes owned by the HRA in the Maple Hills neighborhood experienced roof and siding damage.
- The storm also caused a lot of damage in the manufactured home parks. Park owners have contacted Staff regarding the "Manufactured Home Repair Program" that has been funded through 2006 CDBG program dollars, to see when these funds will be available. Staff will be working on the program guidelines and application.

Planning

- As of this writing, Staff received four proposals from the six consultants chosen to receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) to revise the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations. A fifth proposal is expected by the end of the day. Staff will distribute the proposals to the interview team, who will then meet in the near future to select the consultants whom they will interview.
- Next week, the Planning Commission will continue their review of the various Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan in preparation for the selection of a consultant to revise the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations. The Commission has almost completed their review of the Plan.

Library

- A group of about 20 people (including observers from the library board) met to respond to the Community Needs Assessment and Space Needs. We had hoped to prioritize the identified needs at this meeting. While that was not accomplished, we had a fruitful and interesting discussion. Thanks to all the volunteers who participated.
- Planning continues for the “First Annual” Friends of the Library Spelling Bee set for Thursday, September 28, 7:00 p.m. at the Grand.. A capable planning team chaired by Mary Schier that includes Sue Pokorney and Dan Jorgensen (as well as members of the Friends and the library staff) has been formed. The very first team has registered and we’ve had other groups expressing interest. Marilyn Will, who managed spelling bees at the Middle School for many years, has generously agreed to choose the words, write sentences for each word and write the correct phonetic pronunciations. The Friends are very grateful to Marilyn. Melissa Ousley has agreed to be the pronouncer. Entry forms are available online at <http://northfieldlibraryfriends.org/home/>.
- The library is experiencing a slight lull that will probably continue until mid to late September. It’s the lull between summer recreational activities and reading and the beginning of school projects.
- For several years the Rice County Law Library has provided the Northfield community with access to Westlaw, a comprehensive legal database. Beginning this week, the Law Library has dropped that subscription and will provide us instead with access to a more easily used database called Loislaw. We believe that this access is very much appreciated by the legal community of Northfield.

Police

Accident Information:

- 6 Property Damage Accidents
- 1 Hit and Run Accident
- 0 Personal Injury Accidents

Traffic Enforcement:

- 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. –2 warnings, 1 arrest
- 3 p.m. to 12 a.m. – 1 citation, 2 warnings, 1 arrest
- 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. – 1 warning
- 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. – 7 citations, 6 warnings, 1 arrest

Non-Traffic Arrests:

- 1 arrest – check forgery, controlled substance, shoplifting
- 1 participate in loud party
- 2 underage consumption
- 1 dog running at large
- 3 curfew violations

Assaults/Domestics:

- 1 male/female – verbal
- female/female – verbal
- 1 male/female – pending charges

Juvenile Complaints:

- 3 skateboard
- 4 curfew
- 2 shooting paintball gun at cars
- 1 loitering
- 1 tobacco

Animal Complaints:

- 6 dog running loose
- 1 dog impounded
- 1 injured dog
- 3 barking dog

Parking Complaints:

- none

Loud Party/Disturbances:

- 2 disturbance –trespassed from premises
- 3 loud people - warned
- 2 loud music
- 1 loud vehicle
- 3 loud party
- 1 loud scooter
- 1 loud noise
- 1 group causing problems

Bar/Liquor License Complaints:

- none

Criminal Investigations Information:

- Investigators reviewed and contributed to 42 new files.
- 14 cases were cleared by arrest
- Investigators logged 120 hours this week of investigation time
- 2 new burglaries were reported
- 4 new theft from vehicles were reported

Gang /Drug Events:

- 2 new graffiti complaints were received
- Officer Cordova gave a gang class in Steele County

Exceptional Efforts:

- Officer Nelson worked with the State Fraud Task Force on a major search warrant.
- Officers spent much time assisting people during and after the recent storms.

Other Information:

- Chief Gary Smith and Emergency Management Director Tim Isom completed training at the Emergency Management Institute (FEMA) that provides them certification in storm damage assessment, management and mitigation.
- Community Development Director Brian O’Connell, Councilperson Galen Malecha and Chief Smith met with residents and property owners to discuss issues surrounding rental properties and quality of life issues.
- Chief Smith hosted the Rice County law enforcement administrators quarterly meeting at the Safety Center.
- Chief Smith attended the operations committee and joint powers board meeting in Owatonna of the Joint Dispatch Center.
- Our Summer CSO, Josh Malecha was offered a position as a Northfield Police Officer. His first day as a police officer will be September 5th. Josh is from the Northfield area and has worked for the city during the summer while completing his studies at Minnesota State University for the past four years.

Public Works

Storm Cleanup

- Staff continued street sweeping operations of those streets littered with debris from last week's storm. Compost site had extended hours last weekend and Tuesday of this week. Staff worked with League of Cities adjuster to inventory all buildings for storm damage, including HRA buildings and park shelters. Expected completion date of inspections Tuesday of next week with preliminary report due late next week. Typical damage: all asphalt roofs in need of replacement, damage to metal roofs, vinyl sided buildings, exterior lighting, and exterior HVAC venting and mechanical, two park play structures damaged. Staff has called in HVAC and roofing contractors to help in assessing damage. Excluding Police, 17 plus vehicles sustained some hail damage. Damage was assessed by insurance adjuster Monday and awaiting final report. Glass replacement is approximately 90% complete. Street lighting damage has just begun to be inspected. Thank you's go out to all staff who helped in responding to the resulting storm damage and cleanup.

Streets/Parks

- Ongoing maintenance: Park shelters and park cleaning and trash removal by City staff and Epic Crew, Sechler Park/Babcock Park athletic field preparations and seasonal turf maintenance, general park and ROW mowing (110 acres) and street sweeping the downtown on Thursday, all park playground equipment inspected this week for storm damage.
- Prep for DJJD continues: Clean up of Ice Arena for craft show, inspection of downtown electric power locations, banners hung last Friday, cleanup and mowing of Rodeo grounds, barricade inspection and count completed, completed scheduling of staff hours and duties assigned.
- Contracted mudjacking of downtown sidewalks completed Friday.
- Contracted herbicide spraying of Hwy. 3 ROW and Sechler Fields completed.
- Storm cleanup and sweeping of River Commons area completed.

Facilities

- Staff is continuing work on annual cleaning of Wellness Center Pool. Pool was drained last Friday, pool area acid washed on Monday, replacement repair and replacement of pool lighting completed, carpet replacement in men's and women's locker room completed, regrouting of tile in pool and repair of tile in Men's and Women's locker room scheduled for completion Friday. Pool expected to reopen next Thursday September 7, 2006.
- The outdoor pool work continues, sewer and water mains laid this week, framing of zero entry pool began this week. The 2.5 inch rain of Thursday August 24, 2006 did wash out some of the sand base the pool is constructed on. Contractors will be using a grout mixture to fill those washout areas.

Water

- Staff worked on developing new Standard Operating Procedures for the Water Division.
- Staff worked on updating our water conservation plan. This plan has to be submitted to the State by 10/1/06.
- Staff worked on scada / telemetry problems at the storage tanks.
- Staff met with Malt-O-Meal staff to discuss meter replacement.
- Staff started reading monthly meters.
- Staff completed 2,577 locates as of 8/31/06.

- Staff met with Culligan Water to discuss procedures on water meter reading and to advise Culligan not to have storm water collected by roof gutter system drain into sanitary sewer.
- The Water Division had roof maintenance done on the main office building this week. These were repairs that were needed before the storm. Roof damage that occurred during the storm will be worked on this month.
- The Water Division pumped 15,081,000 gallons of water this week with a daily average of 2,154,429 gallons per day.

Engineering

- Rosewood 5th Addition - Utility installation at Rosewood 5th Addition is well underway. The contractor is aiming to complete the section of utilities and road needed to access a model home so it is ready for the Fall Parade, and then will complete the remaining utilities and road construction.
- TH3 - Staff has been working with MnDOT and the DJJD Committee to address issues in preparation for the festivities. The size of Ames Park has been reduced significantly and the new sod in the area causes some challenges. Traffic was shifted to the east lanes on Thursday afternoon and 5th Street was re-opened. Highway 19 remains closed due to railroad delays; a time estimate has not been provided for when the railroad will complete their work so the highway can be re-opened. MnDOT is evaluating the traffic signal timing to determine if the signal will be made operational by Friday 9/11 or if the 4-way stop will remain in place. City staff have expressed the desire for the signal to be operational for DJJD.
- Library Corner - The only remaining construction on this project is the crosswalk across Division Street. This crosswalk was scheduled for construction after DJJD. However, the delay in the re-opening of Highway 19 may delay start of crosswalk construction across Division Street in an effort to minimize total traffic disruption across town.
- Viking Terrace Bridge - As a follow-up to Council comments on Monday August 21, staff will proceed with the following action plan in regards to the Viking Terrace Bridge:
 - Bridge decking will be inspected weekly by Public Works staff. Staff will document and try to repair any failures to bridge decking.
 - The Greenway Corridor plan, scheduled to be completed and presented to Council in late 2006 will consider whether an alignment over the railroad will be necessary with respect to the overall City trail system for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
 - A public meeting will be held with local residents to present the adopted Greenway Corridor Plan and its conclusion regarding the future of the Viking Terrace Bridge and the over all City trail plan. The meeting will be staffed with a Spanish interpreter to allow transfer of information to and public input from all residents.
 - City staff will complete additional research on issues that could arise during demolition to better understand the costs. These issues include the completion of an asbestos survey, coordination with special requirements of the railroad, and contacting utility companies to identify possible issues during the demolition.
 - The bridge replacement plan will be presented for Council approval in February of 2007. The replacement plan will be based on the Greenway Corridor Study and results of the public meeting. Once Council approves plan, staff will prepare design documents and bid documents for the project. To contain costs bid process should be completed by April, and project construction underway in the summer 2007.

Wastewater

- One of the three primary lift pumps, which pump all city sewage into the plant for treatment, failed. Operators are in the process of removing the pump for shipment to an appropriate repair facility.
- Routine cleaning and inspection of the collection system continues without the seasonal workers who completed their summer work seasons last week.

Resource and Park Planning

- **ArtsPlan06:** no scheduled Planning Committee meeting this week; Committee Chair McWilliams returns from vacation, Committee scheduled to re-convene at that time.
- **Greenway Corridor Action Plan:** (Greater Northfield Area Greenway Corridor System). Preliminary System map has been developed and is available for review. Park Board will discuss corridor and trail alignments at their next meeting; field trip is planned to verify critical sectors and alignments; Steering Committee to meet in early September; process progress payment for consultant – Bonestroo.
- **Way Park:** Staff continues to monitor and receive public comment(s), acceptable up to next PRAB meeting – September 12th. Staff has posted Spencer’s 4 Conceptual Alternatives at City Hall – 2nd Floor across from the conference room and in the late Bagel Brothers store front on Division Street.
- **Downtown Streetscape Projects:** City Staff and Consultant conducted 2006 Meeting #2 of the Mayor’s Downtown Streetscape Task Force on Thursday, August 10th. The primary focus of the meeting and discussion was the ‘5th Street and Water Street Gateway’. Staff also provided updates on a variety of other initiatives, including: bikes racks – 8 to be installed, 6 more ordered. Specific initiatives:
 - *Library Corner* – Project has been landscaped and final lettering for the Library sign and related lighting fixtures have been approved; install will not happen until after DJJD.
 - *5th Street and Water Street Gateway Project* – Conceptual Design Development was presented to the Task Force; comments and revisions will be incorporated into plans and documents; Staff to schedule next meeting and Public Open House.
 - *Riverwalk Gateways* – Final design images are available on the City’s website or in Staff Merriam’s office. Staff is negotiating and receiving install pricing, as well as working with the related building owners (Reese, Ophaug, Bazan, Butler) and tenants and the City to determine the extent of underground utilities; revise project details accordingly.
 - *Parking Lot Edge Treatments* – Staff Merriam has received verbal approval from property owner, Frank Gates (509 Division) to install parking lot railing and edge detail, as approved by all City boards and commissions.
 - *Signage and Wayfinding* – Agreement in place with Neuger to begin project, kick-off meeting was Monday, August 28th; Neuger and Staff will meet (September 6th) to review and coordinate the current Streetscape planning initiatives.

cc: Department Managers