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Hill & Lake Press

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DECEMBER 17, 2010

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL

Property Taxes

By Lisa Goodman

City Council Member Seventh Ward

Many residents have been reaching out to me about the property tax issue and statement they recently. I completely understand the shock that came with this statement; in my situation my condo lost value and taxes went up 12%, for Doug it was 17%. I am hoping to answer the question of why this is happening. Those of you who know me well know I am very big on detail and this e-mail will be no exception. Please read the parts that interest you and feel free to pass it on if you'd like.

To start, the timing situation with the notice is a downright disgrace. The City does not prepare the statements; they are prepared and sent by Hennepin County. Our staff told us the notices were supposed to have been sent out a week or more ago; but for some reason this did not happen. I am sick about this as it is simply not right to have a statement go out with a public hearing notice and the meeting is the next day, or the same day in some cases. There will be a 2nd hearing on the night of the budget adoption on December 13th at 6:05. While this is not ideal as the budget will be adopted later that night; I assure you attending to make your concerns known is still a good idea. I believe everyone on the Council and the Mayor already know what a huge burden this increase will be for most if not all taxpayers in the City. Changes, if any, could come as a result of both tonight's meeting and all of the public feedback received during the adoption process set to begin December 7th. Again I am very sorry this happened.

Like many other communities, Minneapolis has experienced many budget challenges in this decade. Beginning in 2003 the State of Minnesota made significant cuts in Local Government Aid to Minneapolis and many other cities. The cuts in Local Government Aid have continued throughout the decade and, combined with a significantly weakened economy and other factors, have forced City leaders to make difficult decisions each year about City services vs. property taxes.

It is important to know that the total 2011 city budget for all funds and the independent boards such as the park board is \$1.36 billion. In 2009 the budget was \$1.406 billion. We have shrunk the size of City Government. Over the last 10 years, City spending has declined in constant dollars: after adjusting for inflation, the City's proposed budget for 2011 is 7 percent smaller than the City's budget in 2001. The City will have fewer full-time employees in 2011 than at any point in the last 10 years.



December 2010 blizzard at Dupont Avenue in Lowry Hill

Photos by Dorothy Childers

LATER WITH LISA



The party at the Normandy included l to r: Andrew Dayton, Lisa Goodman, Governor Elect Mark Dayton, and Eric Dayton

This year a 1% increase in property taxes amounts to \$2.67 million. Meaning the proposed 7.5% increase brings in about \$20 million of which \$17.7 million is only for increased pension payments.

There isn't a simple answer as to why many property owners experienced a property tax decrease in 2010 and an increase in 2011. However there are several factors that have played a major role in increasing the City's overall tax rate — meaning the amount that the City raises from property taxes:

- Increasing obligations to closed pension funds
- A decrease in Local Government Aid from the State
- The recertification of Tax Increment Financing Districts

- Paying down the City's old debts

In addition to the amount that the City raises from property taxes (the tax rate), two more factors also affect your individual tax bill:

- Changing property values compared to other properties,
- State law changes which shift burdens away from commercial and industrial property to residential property.

I'll address the first three issues one at a time:

Funding for the Target Center and Neighborhoods

Your taxes are higher than they would be otherwise because the City will contribute beginning in 2011 to

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Minneapolis Audubon Society Bryant Square (31st & Bryant Avenue S)

Friday, January 14, 2011 1 p.m.

Don Luce, Bell Museum Curator of Exhibits will speak on Frances Lee Jaques: Wildlife Artist & Naturalist. Please join us for the program and refreshments. All are welcome. For more information call 952-920-0176.

Bicycle Advisory Committee Volunteer Opportunity

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will appoint three community members to the newly restructured Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee. The new structure will allow city residents a greater voice regarding bicycling in Minneapolis. Interested? Call 612-230-6400 by 4:30 pm on December 22.

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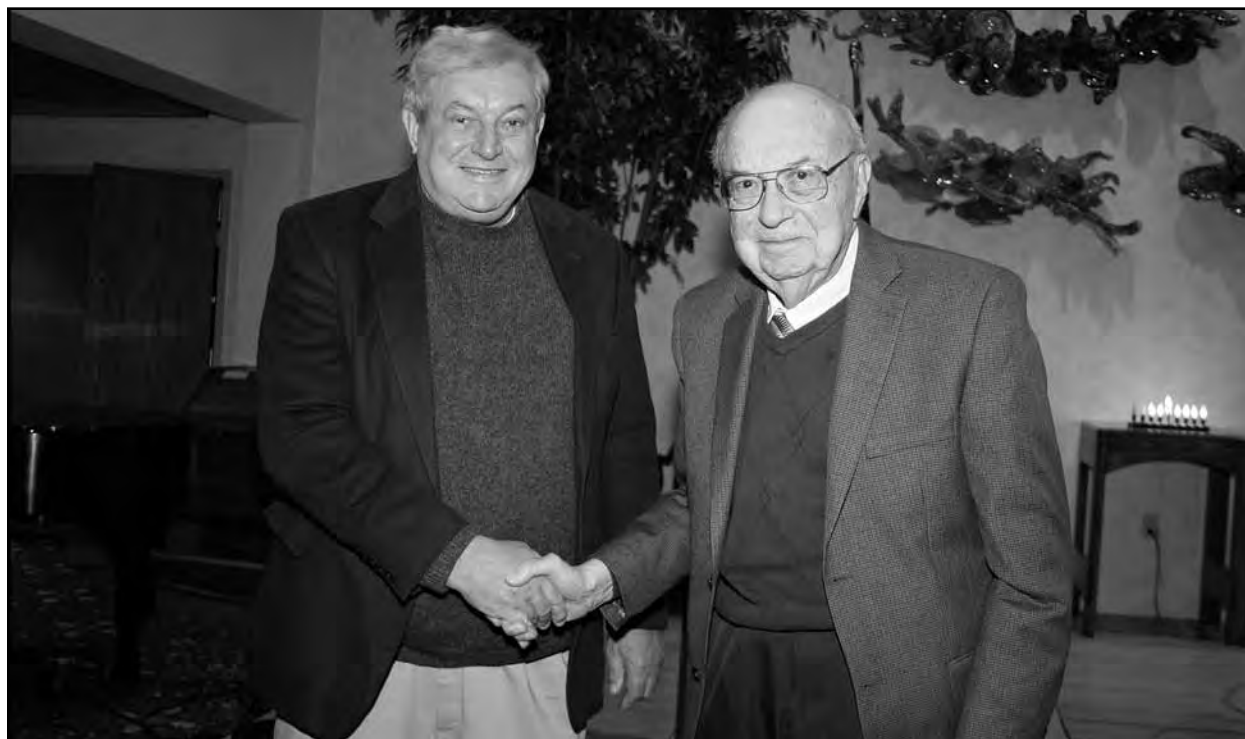
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HAPPENINGS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Dec. 21, 5:30-7:30 Kenwood Winter Solstice Celebration, downtown Kenwood
Through Dec. 27, Minneapolis Photo Center, 2400 North Second Street, Tom Arndt's F Stop show
Jan. 8 Hauser Dance Open House
Jan. 12 7 pm Birchbark Reading Series
January 23, Ice Skating Social
Neighborhood monthly meetings:
CIDNA: 1st Tuesday at Jones-Harrison
EIRA: 1st Tuesday at Grace-Trinity Church
KIAA: 1st Monday at Kenwood Rec Center
LHNA: 1st Tuesday at Kenwood Rec Center



Shown congratulating Ken Moritz is Art Higinbotham.

Photo by Dorothy Childers

CIDNA Honors Ken Moritz

By Glenna Case

Ken Moritz is one of those remarkable human beings that the rest of us stand in awe of and wonder how he does it. He has been a lifelong community servant. Now approaching his mid-nineties, he has decided to cut back a bit. He recently notified the Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) of his

plans to retire from the Board of Directors where he has served for over 20 years.

Moritz joined the CIDNA Board in 1986 or 1987 and became active on the Neighborhood Revitalization Committee (NRP). He was part of the group that wrote the neighborhood's first neighborhood revitalization action plan in 1994. He also served on the zoning and variance committee in the early years. Moritz has a quiet influential style and often worked in the background to address issues of importance to the neighborhood. He provided the Board with sage advice. One of our long-time members described Ken Moritz as, "a balanced voice of reason on every topic." Another said, "Ken could always be counted on to provide good perspective on issues in the context of what had gone on in CIDNA in the past." In his honor, the CIDNA Board made a gift to the Rotary International Foundation, a worldwide volunteer professional organization where Ken belongs.

Council Member Lisa Goodman commented that Ken had been a major advocate for the aging population and the new public library. She stated that we have the new public library in no small measure due to Ken Moritz's work. She described him as one of her favorite people to work with and presented him with a gift.

CIDNA is grateful to Ken Moritz for his many years of service and is pleased to acknowledge his many contributions to our community.

TOYS FOR TOTS

New and unwrapped toys can be dropped off at Kenwood Pet Clinic (2107 Penn Avenue S.) through December 17th. This year's collection is in memory of Dr. Melanie Freeman.

Kenwood Winter Solstice Celebration

**Tuesday, December 21st
5:30-7:30pm**
Join the Kenwood Cafe and ARtrageous Adventures for an seasonal evening of winter fun.
Storytelling
Chili Meal Deal
Gingerbread Cookie Decorating
Winter Craft
Solstice Fairy Face Painting
Photo Booth/Card Making

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR, ELMER HANKES

Craig Wilson sent Elmer Hankes interview questions, but Elmer declined to answer the questions. Instead, he chose to tell some stories from his almost 100 years of life.

Admiral Mason Reeves, Commander in Chief Pacific, had visited Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) from which I was about to graduate. I had talked to him about getting into the Navy even though my draft classification was 4F because of a long history of stomach ulcers. He thought that since I had experience with small vessels as a Sea Scout, was a member of the US Naval Institute and The American Society of Naval Engineers, I might still be accepted. But it was not to be. After the Navy's rejection I applied for the third set of locks project in Panama, with the same result. So I accepted an offer from Minneapolis Honeywell to become a serviceman for the Norden bomb sight system at US and overseas air bases.

On the second day of class a messenger came for me and took me to headquarters where I was assigned to Gil Taylor the head of the mechanical engineers in the big red brick factory and office on Fourth Street. Willis Gillie, a great engineer, was our chief. Because of their success with the Norden project, the Army had selected Honeywell to redo the turbo-boost control system for the high altitude bombers. Their GE controls would sometimes accelerate out of control and blow up the engines. This new project had the highest priority available. And thereby hands an interesting story.

Because of its high electrical resistance I requested a sample of a high atomic number metal. In relatively short order a sales representative brought me what I wanted (I still have it). He was a friendly, loquacious guy and told me about his enormous factory in a town called Oakridge in Tennessee. It had many employees and used a lot of power but its total output was shipped in a panel truck, once a month! Having recently taken atomic physics classes at IIT I knew that he was talking about atomic warfare. This was my first inadvertent brush with an event of historic importance.

When our project was ready it was fitted to the B24 assigned to Honeywell and we made a high altitude flight to Midway airport in Chicago. After checking the fuel gauges we headed back to Wold Chamberlain. Our test pilot was known as the flying grandfather. I had moved to the bombardier's seat in the prow and he set out to give me a thrill or two by diving at Wisconsin cows and farmers. When one of our engines conked out for lack of fuel he trimmed ship and nursed us to a safe landing on three engines. The gas gauges had given faulty readings in Chicago! This occurrence prompted Honeywell to devise a different system and establish new and extensive contracts.

Although Honeywell had exclusive use of that B24 it was always under Army control. Unfortunately an Air force lieutenant and his pregnant wife had been permitted to deadhead to Chicago and she lost her baby because of the low cabin pressure.

When Honeywell established a research department I was its third member but by then the US had crossed the Rhine at Remagen. Nothing we might do could be in production soon enough to be of military use. In addition to my assigned projects I tried to arouse interest in an extensive study in ability of animals to find their way around vast distances of land and sea. (See america.com) Extensive lay-offs were made even before VE Day. I had fallen in love with Minneapolis, as a place to live and work, and began a new career as a licensed consulting engineer. From my earliest days in the city I had been, with permission, taking courses at the U and was close to a Master in Engineering, but since my businesses were growing and the U would not grant a Doctor of Engineering, there was no point in further academic accreditation. I rented various spaces including the southeast corner store of the Metropolitan Life Building. A few marble slabs from the lobby are in my yard. Although its passing is lamented, it was a fire hazard and had mechanical and economic shortcomings.

My mother, sister Emily, and Tuffy (the smartest



Elmer Hankes Photo by Dorothy Childers

dog ever) had joined me at 2620 Portland Avenue. Mother died in mid 1948 and Em, Tuffy and I moved to 1768 South Colfax in time for Christmas 1948. I married Barbara in 1962. Camilla was born in 1963. The house had been converted to a legal duplex to accommodate Emily and was changed back after her passing.

I bought 1768 Colfax from Garvy, its third owner, for \$17,000. I learned later that he told his wife that he only got \$12,000! That's how low prices were in the Kenwood area. Taxes were just \$250. Young marrieds were discovering these bargains and moving in to raise their families. The schools, Douglas, Kenwood, and West High, were excellent and ethnically balanced. Douglas, from which my daughter graduated in its last year of existence, had almost the same ratios as did the city as a whole. West was the elite academically, and certainly in spirit and extracurricular activities. In our butler's pantry there are two nickel plated electric coffee urns engraved as gifts of the '20 '21 Douglas PTA. Just imagine that! In 10 years they'll be a hundred. What shall we do with them? Give them to the school board for their new headquarters? To Kenwood School? Kowalski's, the new to be built USBank, the Walker? Send your suggestions to Jean Deatrck.



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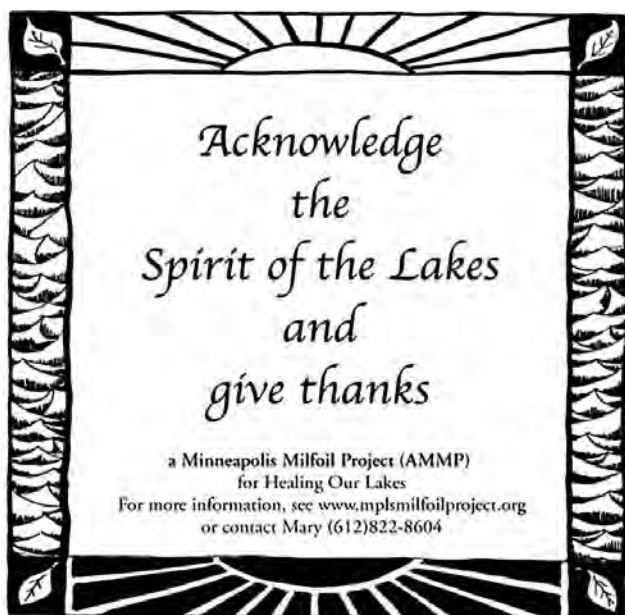
The Birchbark Books Reading Series continues its season of readings on Wednesday, January 12, 2011, 7 pm at Birchbark Books and the Kenwood Cafe.

Reading on January 12 will be Deborah Keenan, author of the Minnesota Book Award winning Willow Room, Green Door: New and Selected Poems and Mark Conway, author of award winning Dreaming Man, Face Down (see bios below).

Full deli menu will be available prior and during the reading. Birchbark Books is located at 2115 West 21st Street, Minneapolis. (612) 374-4023.

Deborah Keenan is the author of eight collections of poetry. Her newest, Willow Room, Green Door: New and Selected Poems, received the Minnesota Book Award for Poetry in 2008. She is a full-time professor in the Graduate Liberal Studies Program at Hamline University, and also teaches at the Loft, and privately. She is at work on a different kind of poetry collection, and also works steadily on collages.

Mark Conway's book, Dreaming Man, Face Down, won the 2009 American Poetry Journal Book Prize and was published this fall. His previous book of poetry, Any Holy City, won the Gerald Cable Award and was short-listed for the 2007 PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry. His poems have appeared in The Paris Review, Slate, American Poetry Review, Ploughshares, Bomb, The Walrus, and elsewhere. He lives in Avon, Minnesota and directs the Literary Arts Institute at the College of Saint Benedict.



Building Strong Community Schools Close to Home MINNEAPOLIS MINDS

By Steve Kotvis

"I just wish they hadn't given us a choice. I wish they would have just told us our kids are going to Anwatin." Those were the words of a friend of mine whose kids attend Kenwood and this year Anthony Middle School. I ran into another neighbor at this past fall who explained how he was on his way to petition a change from Anwatin to Anthony. "I wished she would keep going to Anwatin, but all of her friends are now going to Anthony," he regrettably explained. I think they've got something here.

As any of us are either old enough to remember going through middle school (or what used to be called Junior High) or have raised kids of this age, it's obvious that the social norms rule when you're a teenager. At this time of life of defining oneself and becoming independent, the friends you hang with are so important to the process. It's natural that teens want to go to school with their friends. But better yet, it's great to have opportunities to make new friends, gain new perspectives.

School choices for Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) were affected this past year with the Changing Schools Options (SCO) plan. The impetus of the plan was to ensure all schools throughout the district are attractive options for students and their families. And quite possibly as important, the district just had to find ways reduce the operating budget, and focused on the excessive costs of busing in the name of choice. The plan acknowledges that it is unacceptable to have some great schools and some simply unacceptable schools. Great community schools must be found throughout the district. Additionally, the plan strives to save money on the ridiculous millions of dollars wasted to bus students crisscrossing our city, where students leapfrog undesirable schools within their own communities. Reducing busing saves money, time and natural resources.

Here's the rub. Because of the CSO plan, kids from Kenwood School, as well as those from nearby Jefferson and Whittier, are now articulating to Anthony Middle School. To be honest, I've lived in Kenwood since 1985 and I didn't even know where Anthony Middle School was located. It's at 57th and Irving, is six miles from Kenwood School. That's three times the commute of going to Anwatin Middle School, located two miles from Kenwood. Located just north of I-394 in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood, Anwatin is not only closer, but it seems like it is a natural as a community school. Anyone who's participated WESAC baseball, as I did as coach for some seven years, recognizes the community link between the two neighborhoods.

The rationale that officials at the district offer as to why kids from Kenwood, Jefferson, and Whittier are directed to Anthony is pretty much because of a line on a map that defines the district's "Zones" (formerly and still sometimes referred to as "Areas"). Schools south of 394 are in Zone 3 and those north are in Zone 1. While

acknowledging that lines imperfectly define how we all live, MPS agreed to blur this line. Students from Kenwood, Jefferson, and Whittier (as well as Lyndale) schools may now choose to go to Anwatin. But that was a recent decision and in many ways many of the proverbial Kenwood horses have already left the barn. They've trotted to Anthony where enrollment has soared and the school is now overcrowded and talks of facility expansion are underway. Meanwhile, Anwatin is adequately occupied, but frankly could benefit from the energies and talents a Kenwood, Jefferson, and Whittier parent base could bring to it.

Anwatin is a very good option. It is the first and still the only IB middle school in the District. All students at Anwatin are in IB and that prepares them best if they want to enter Southwest's IB programme. It is also city's only Spanish Dual Immersion (DI) middle school, in which about one-fourth of the students are taught under well developed DI disciplines. The DI students, who must be enrolled in the program by 2nd grade and articulate from Emerson and Windom, are also IB students and a critical part of the whole Anwatin school community. Moreover, due to restructuring, Anwatin has a high energy, engaging principal who's handpicked a top-notch corps of teachers and school leaders to start this school year.

As much as I agree with my fellow neighbors who said they wished the district would just simplify things and not provide choice and just direct Kenwood and other nearby community school students and their parents to Anwatin as they did when my kids attended the school, there is satisfaction in knowing that for Kenwood, Jefferson, Whittier, and Lyndale students and parents, there is a choice. Anwatin is working to build their message and trust with prospective students and parents in South Minneapolis. I hope Anwatin is given a serious look by Kenwood students and parents for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of a stronger MPS district as a whole.

Steve Kotvis, a Kenwood resident serves on a number of boards and committees relative to public education and offers a monthly perspective in the Hill & Lake Press "Minneapolis Minds" column. For full disclosure, his most recent volunteer effort has been to help schools to brand and market themselves including Anwatin Middle School of which he writes about this month. He can be reached at stevek@elemenop.us.

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The Season of Giving at Kenwood School

By Cecilia Michel

School children at Kenwood Elementary School are busy this month giving to others as well as keeping up with their studies. Three opportunities to express appreciation and to help others, both within the school and on a global basis, highlight Kenwood's December agenda.

The annual holiday food collection for Kenwood families who are experiencing difficult times is once again part of the giving season. Generous families provide all the fixings for a traditional holiday dinner (turkey, fresh vegetables, sweet potatoes, dessert, bread, and fruit). Parents assemble these items into baskets, which are delivered to students' homes on December 16. This long-standing tradition is an opportunity for the Kenwood school community to come together to express care and concern for one another.

Kenwood students are also focused globally this month. Fourth grade students are spearheading an effort to respond to the needs of earthquake-ravaged Haiti by collecting soap to fight the devastating effect of the cholera outbreak there. "Students are keenly aware of the critical situation in Haiti and know the impact a bar of soap will have on a Haitian family," according to teacher Susan Kalin. "They have read articles about the horrific disease and the need for a simple item, soap, which is beyond the means of people with an average daily income of \$1.25." From now until winter break,

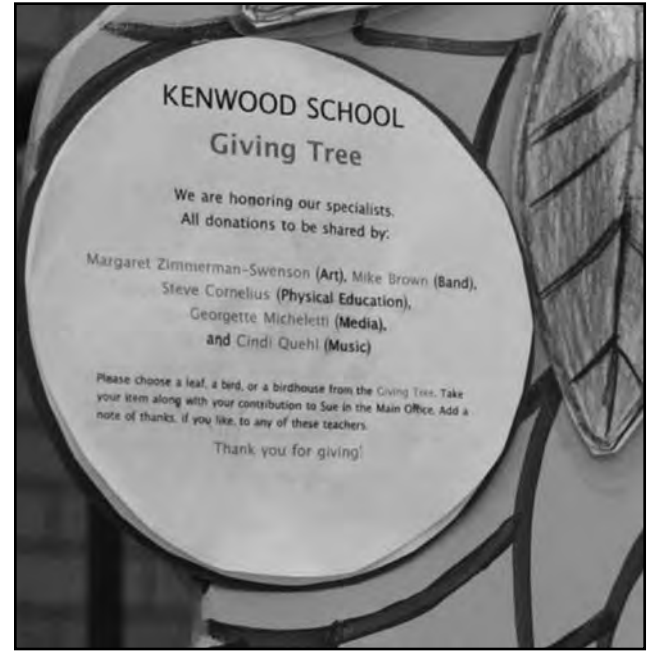
students are asking the Kenwood community to put its generous spirit into action by donating bath size bars of unscented soap to be sent to Haiti. Donations will be accepted to help with shipping costs. Interested donors can deliver soap to the Kenwood office. Checks (payable to Kenwood School, "Soap for Haiti in the memo line") will also be collected in the school office.

Another tradition at Kenwood is the Giving Tree, which has again been "planted" in the school atrium. The Giving Tree is a way to show appreciation to our wonderful team of Specialist Teachers who share their knowledge and love of art, music, media and physical education, week in and week out with every Kenwood student. Donors pluck off a leaf or bird from the tree. Each leaf and bird represents an opportunity to give to a fund that helps the teachers replenish school supplies for their classrooms and areas of learning. Donations by Kenwood families are collected in the school office.

Each of this trio of Kenwood giving opportunities this season reflects the spirit of generosity at Kenwood School on a local as well as global level.

Kindergarten tours at Kenwood are being given on Monday and Thursday mornings during December and January. Contact Sue Payne at 612 668-2778 to schedule a tour.

The Giving Tree at Kenwood School



Photos by Courtney Cushing Kiernat

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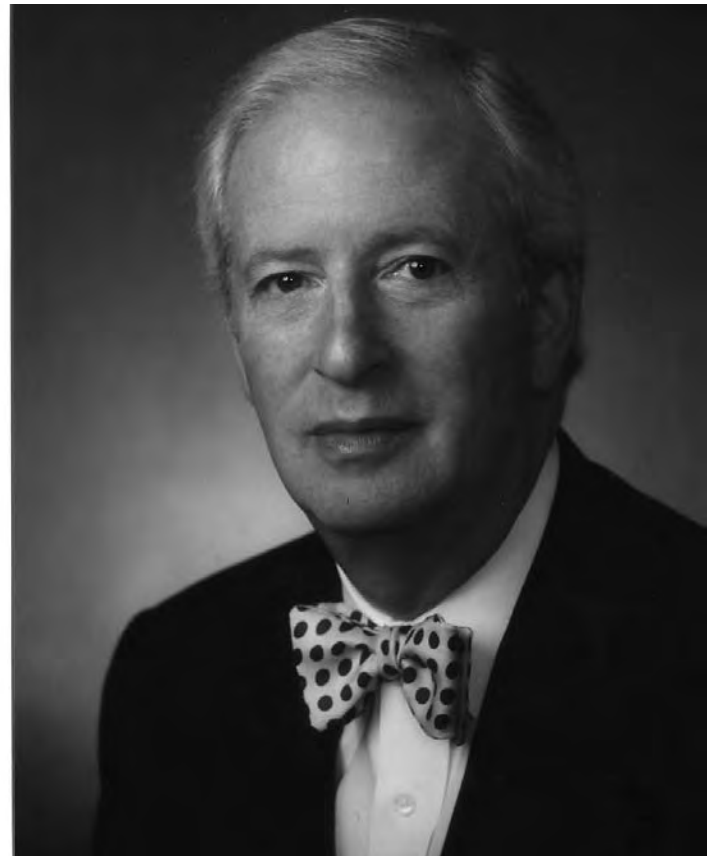
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Property Taxes continued from page one

Target Center and neighborhoods using a tool called Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Approximately one third of the City portion of the property tax increase is related to the recertification of Tax Increment Financing Districts.

In 1990, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program was established and funded through Tax Increment Financing. This neighborhood reinvestment program was intended as a 20 year initiative that was set to sunset – along with the Tax Increment Financing districts - in 2009. The City and neighborhood groups had been planning this major turning point for almost 10 years. Later that decade, the City's purchase in 1995 of the Target Center increased long-term demand for resources.

Why was a new TIF district needed?

During the 2008 Legislative Session, the Minnesota Legislature authorized the City to establish a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district that would include properties located in specific TIF districts that were set to expire in 2009. The earliest year that the City could get revenue from the new TIF districts is 2011, which means that for one year (2010) the value within expiring districts returned to the general tax base, resulting in property tax relief for most homeowners in 2010. However, because of the needs of neighborhoods and the Target Center, the City voted to recertify half of the expiring TIF districts to generate revenue for these two priorities beginning in 2011. **I voted against this recertification because it was a back door way to raise revenue for these two needs regardless of other needs and dedicated the funding for 10 years.**

Under the special legislation, TIF revenue from the new recertified district could **only be used** to pay principal and interest on Target Center bonds or for "neighborhood revitalization purposes." The legislation did not specify or require any particular allocation of revenues between these purposes. The City Council allocated this revenue to be split with 50% going toward Target Center debt service and 50% going toward neighborhood revitalization efforts.

The combined projected annual TIF revenue available for these two priorities is estimated at \$10 million to \$11.6 million, with each receiving half of the final amount collected annually during the 10-year life of the district. This 50-50 split means that each priority would share equally in the upside and downside of changes to the tax revenues collected in this TIF district.

This action means the tax BASE is smaller, which is part of why taxes went up because the City needs a higher rate over the smaller base of taxpayers to bring in the same amount of money.

Increasing obligations to closed pension funds

The City's required payments to its pension funds continue to increase. Much of the increased costs can be

attributed to the City's "closed" plans (meaning new members are no longer accepted into the plans): the Minneapolis Police Relief Association (MPRA), the Minneapolis Fire Relief Association (MFRA), and the Minneapolis Employees Retirement Fund (MERF).

From 2009-2011, property-tax supported contributions to three closed funds total \$45.6 million. For two of the plans, the Minneapolis Police Relief Association (MPRA) and the Minneapolis Fire Relief Association (MFRA), the City is responsible under State law for making up for poor investment returns if performance doesn't reach State law assumptions of a 6 percent annual investment return. At the same time the City does not control the funds or how investment decisions are made or evaluated.

When these funds investment returns come in at less than 6 percent annually, there is an "unfunded liability" and the City must make up the difference. During economic downturns, these unfunded liabilities can increase by millions of dollars. In 2008, the respective market returns were -30 percent and -29 percent, though in 2009 they both had gains of 27 percent.

City payments provided from property taxes will increase from \$15.5 million in 2010 to \$23.0 million in 2011 for the three closed pension plans. The City is in litigation with the MPRA and MFRA over benefit payments the funds made to their members.

Minneapolis Employee's Retirement Fund (MERF), a closed fund:

The 2011 payment to MERF is \$4.5 million, of which \$2.6 million is financed through the property tax levy and \$2.0 million is financed through non-tax funds. The 2011 budget allocates funds necessary for the debt service on bonds the City issued for MERF issued from 2002-03. Debt service in 2011 is \$3.2 million, of which \$2.0 million is financed through the property tax levy and \$1.2 million through non-tax funds.

Due to poor market returns in 2008, MERF was only 56% funded as of June 30, 2009. This placed MERF's funding status in a very negative position that required immediate attention. During the 2010 legislative session, legislation was approved that merged MERF into a statewide plan (the Public Employees Retirement Association, or PERA) in July, 2010, with funding commitments from the City from 2012 through 2032 in the range of \$20-\$23 million per year.

Minneapolis Police Relief Association (MPRA), a closed fund:

Legislation passed during the 2005 legislative session extended the amount of time the City has to fully fund this plan's liabilities by ten years to 2020. The result was a lower upfront annual City contribution that increases over time and extends for a longer period. The City's 2010 contribution to MPRA from the tax levy was \$11.8 million.

In 2011, the contribution increases to \$15.5 million, though this number would have been greater if the City had not prevailed in a lawsuit against the fund. Investment gains or losses as compared to the State Law assumption of 6% are phased in over a three-year timeframe. As a result, the 2008 negative investment performance will result in increased contribution requirements in 2011 and 2012 unless offset by gains above the 6% assumptions in 2010 and 2011. Current projections call for estimated contributions increasing to \$19 million in 2012. An additional \$2.6 million will

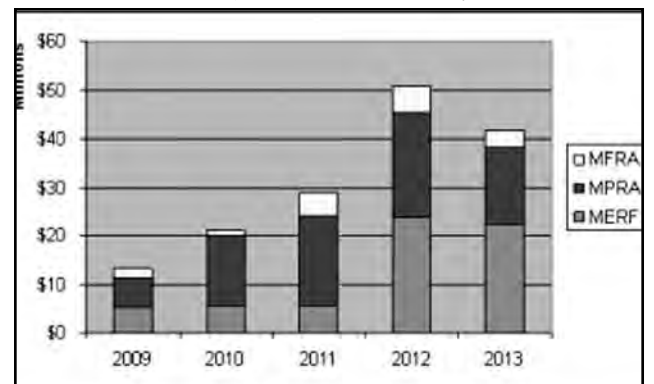
be required for debt service in 2011 on the \$53 million in bonds that were issued during 2002-04 to fund MPRA. This obligation would otherwise have fallen on the property tax levy during those years and was spread out over time through the bonding process.

Minneapolis Fire Relief Association (MFRA), a closed fund:

In 2005, the City resumed significant contributions to the MFRA. The MFRA was previously 100% funded, which meant that the City did not need to make annual contributions. The stock market downturn in March of 2001 resulted in investment performance that reduced the funding level of the MFRA, making contributions necessary again. The City's 2010 contribution to MFRA from the property tax levy was \$1.3 million. In 2011, this contribution will increase to \$4.9 million.

Investment gains and losses as compared to the State's assumed 6% are phased in over a three-year timeframe. As a result, the 2008 negative investment performance will result in increases in 2011 and 2012 also unless offset by gains above the 6% assumptions in 2010 and 2011. Current projections call for contributions increasing to \$5.3 million in 2012.

The following graph shows the historical and projected levy under current law for Minneapolis closed funds (MPRA, MFRA, and MERF), with the Minneapolis share of the merged MERF (now a Division of PERA) in the form of levy:



Teacher's Retirement Association (TRA):

In the 2006 Legislative session, the State combined the Minneapolis Teachers Retirement Fund Association (MTRA) with the State's Teachers Retirement Association (TRA). As part of the legislation, the City was required to redirect its annual \$2.25 million MTRA tax levy to the TRA through 2037.

The Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA):

PERA is the plan for most current City employees. During the 2010 Legislative session, the State changed the employer's contribution level in the coordinated plan (the plan where benefit recipients also get Social Security benefits) from 7.00% to 7.25% for 2011. The police and fire plan's employer's contribution level increases from 14.1% to 14.4% in 2011. Members of the police and fire plan do not receive Social Security benefits. The estimated total cost to the City as an employer for its membership in PERA in 2011 is \$28.2 million, which is covered in the department budgets where the employees work.

	2010	2011	Change
PERA	\$12.7	\$13.6	\$0.9
PERA P&F	\$13.3	\$14.6	\$1.3
Total	\$26.0	\$28.2	\$2.2

Taxes continued on page 8

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Thomas Lowry Park

By Barbara and Jimmy Fogel and Barry Lazarus

Barbara Fogel, Sara Peterman, Suzanne Payne and Barry Lazarus, the Board of Directors of Friends of Thomas Lowry Park (“TLP”), wish all of you HAPPY HOLIDAYS and a HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR.

TLP looked great at the end of fall. The gardens were pruned and weeded and the planter has a majestic look. The Park has now been completely irrigated and will be ready for next spring and summer. The helpers to Mother Nature who made TLP even more beautiful need to be given specific credit.

Friends wants to extend thank-yous to the following special persons for services and funds provided to TLP as follows:

Barbara and Jimmy Fogel and Suzanne and Bill Payne for their unheralded and selfless work in TLP by pruning, weeding, watering, and the like over hundreds of hours. Also to members of the Board for their generous contributions to Friends.

Sara and John Peterman for maintaining the books and records of Friends and for filing documents which need to be filed from time to time.

Our Park Board Commissioner Anita Tabb for always having an open ear to TLP issues and for her speedy work when bureaucratic snags could have slowed or stopped installation of the irrigation system within TLP.

Thanks also to Michael P. Schmidt, Assistant Superintendent Operations of the MPRB for his assistance in the irrigation system permit process. Paul Domholt of the Forestry unit MPRB guided the placement of the trees from People for Parks

To George Pragal, Lake District Maintenance Crew Leader of the MPRB who maintains the Seven Pools and his crew of gardeners for their respective commitment and service to TLP during the spring, summer and fall.

To the estate of Carl Remick for funding the pur-

chase of 12 trees to be planted in TLP. Carl Remick’s estate specified that funding was to be used strictly for reforestation.

To Tangletoen Gardens and its owners and staff for partnering with Friends by donating the beautiful seasonal and the plantings and labor for the planter and triangle beds in the southwest corner and the perennial bed at the east end of TLP.

To Craig Wilson, a member of the Board of Directors of LHNA, for the countless hours he devoted to TLP and especially the bidding process for the material and labor donations for completing the remainder of TLP’s irrigation system and the installation thereof and as to other issues affecting TLP.

To President Janet Hallaway and the remainder of the LHNA Board for its partnership with Friends with respect to TLP and for LHNA’s contribution to the costs not donated to completion of the Park irrigation system.

To Sebastian Joe’s and its owners and staff for their continued, enthusiastic, and generous support of events held in TLP by the donation of its fabulous ice cream and coffee.

To Rain Bird Corporation and Carefree Lawn and Irrigation for their respective donations or price reductions on parts for the irrigation system.

To the First Unitarian Society for its generous donation to Friends and for rounding up members to assist in the annual Park cleanup.

To Ralph Sievert, Director of Forestry for MPRB for speaking about correct tree planting at the Arbor Day event, and St. Croix Tree Service for the demonstration of how to inject ash trees to abate the attack on the tree by the emerald ash bore.

To all TLP’s special neighbors and friends for your respective contributions of time and money to enable TLP to remain the jewel of our neighborhood.

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Local Government Aid (LGA)

Local Government Aid (LGA) was originally created in 1971 as a way to level the playing field so that all communities, regardless of whether they have a high or low property tax base, have some equity in the quality of education, county and city services. It is also used to assist communities that provide services to significant numbers of people who are not residents (communities that are home to lots of jobs and employers, educational institutions or convention or recreational visitors).

In Minneapolis, Local Government Aid goes into the City's General Fund, which primarily pays for essential services like Police, Fire, 911 and Public Works, as well as many of the City's other core functions.

Although the State sends money to the City of Minneapolis in the form of Local Government Aid, it is important to note that Minneapolis is a net contributor of revenue to the State of Minnesota, meaning that the City sends more money to the State in sales, income and property taxes than it gets back in return. Minneapolis has been the State's largest recipient of LGA because it has the largest population in state and also provides services to the hundreds of thousands of people who come to the city daily for work, education, conventions, sporting events or other activities.

How have cuts in Local Government Aid impacted property taxes?

LGA was once the largest single source of revenue to the City's General Fund, but today property taxes

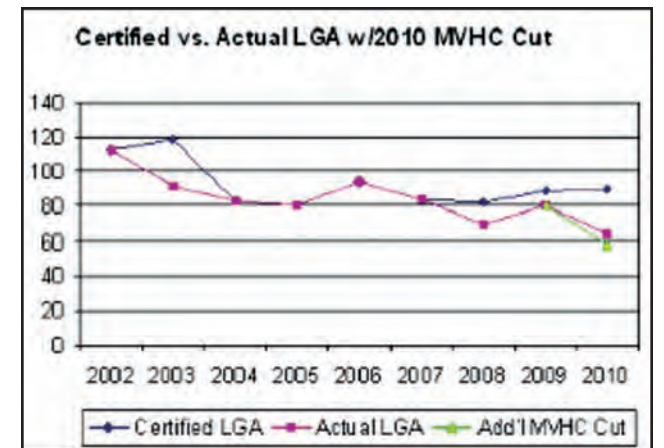
are. In 2003 State Aid accounted for 40 percent of General Fund revenue, while property taxes accounted for only 29 percent. In 2011, however, State Aid will account for only 22 percent of General Fund revenue, while property taxes will make up 44 percent.

In other words, in order for the City to maintain essential public services like Police, Fire, 911 and Public Works, cuts in LGA have led directly to increases in property taxes.



Beginning in 2003, the State of Minnesota has made drastic cuts Minneapolis' Local Government Aid, and the City's LGA has been cut by \$54 million over the last three years (2008 - 2010) alone

For 2011, the State has certified \$94 million in combined LGA and Market Value Homestead Credit funds to the City of Minneapolis. The Mayor's recommended budget is built on the assumption that the State will keep its commitment to Minneapolis and that the City will receive this entire amount.



Property Values and State Law Changes
Consistent with national trends, residential property values in Minneapolis have been hit hard by foreclo-

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tures, short-sales and the economic recession. Single-family home values peaked in Minneapolis in early 2007, with a median citywide value of \$230,000. By 2010, that median value had declined to \$183,500 - a reduction of 20 percent in three years.

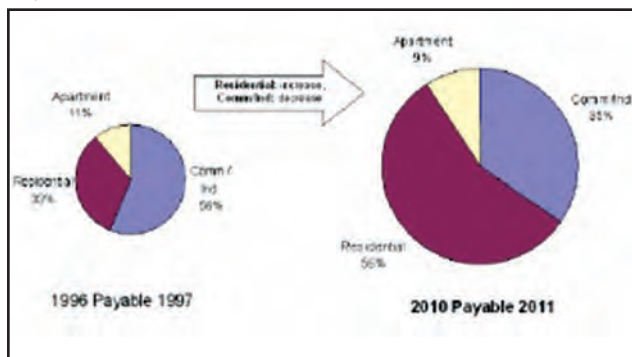
Because of this decline in property values, the overall residential tax base in 2010 (the cumulative value of all resident properties in Minneapolis) declined by 4.3 percent from 2009.

How can lower property values result in higher property taxes?

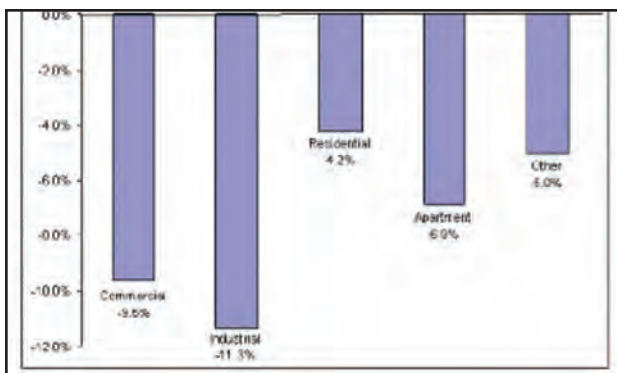
With a smaller tax base, even if the cumulative amount of the taxes being collected (the tax levy) remained constant, taxes per individual property would rise. To illustrate this point ... imagine that you have two apple pies; one in a 12" pan and the other in a 10" pan. If you took a slice of pie from the 12" pan one day, but then wanted the same amount of pie from a 10" pan the next day, you would need to take a much larger piece of the pie from the 10" pan than the 12" pan.

It's also important to note that the State of Minnesota sets the tax policy, which determines what proportion of the overall property taxes are paid by each class that is being taxed: residential, apartment, and commercial/industrial properties. Using the illustration above, State tax policy determines what proportion of the pie goes to residential property owners, apartment property owners, and commercial/industrial property owners.

State law changes over the last decade have shifted the burden of property taxes from commercial and industrial properties onto residential properties (meaning residential property owners are now forced to pay a larger proportion of the overall property tax "pie"). This shift has caused residential property taxes to climb at a greater rate than taxes for other property types in the City.



It is also important to note that in the most recent year for which your property taxes will be based on, property values in all other categories fell faster than residential values, so the shift of the tax burden onto residential homes continues this year.




Change in valuation is for taxes payable from 2010 to 2011

This is a complicated issue. I worry that this combination of issues, the perfect storm of problems in government generally, has a real life impact on Minneapolis residents and their ability and willingness to live in the City. I assure you I have consistently looked at ways we can eliminate services, even supporting the elimination of popular core services. It is no longer possible to do more with less.

Please feel free to be in touch via a phone call 673-2207, if you wish to discuss this more or have ideas to share. Thanks you for your time in reading my response and as always for your participation in City Government.


After many hours of public testimony, the City Council adopted a 2011 budget which included an additional \$6.1 million in cuts. This will result in a tax levy reduction from 7.5%, authorized by the Board of Estimate and Taxation in September and the 6.5% increased proposed by Mayor Rybak in August to an approved 4.7% tax levy for the City of Minneapolis portion of your property taxes.


This budget includes an additional \$6.1 million in spending reductions. To assist with tax relief in future years this budget outlines several measures to be taken including: A salary freeze for 2 years pending union/bargaining units approval and a freeze on NRP Phase 2 spending to 50% of the approved allocation. Additionally, the Council has asked for a plan to provide property tax relief in 2012 and 2013 by capturing 50 percent of the value of the properties in the consolidated Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district and allocating that to tax relief rather than spending.




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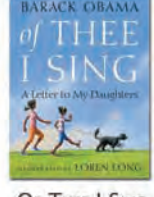
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EAST ISLES RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (EIRA)

By Monica Smith, Recorder, and Tina Frontera,

Minutes from the EIRA Board of Directors Meeting December 7, 2010 Grace-Trinity Community Church

Board members present: Mark Lofstrom (President), Jane Schommer (Vice President), Al Rodriguez (Treasurer), Tina Frontera (Secretary), Rosita Acosta, Ginna Portman Amis, Harvey Ettinger, Peter Levine, Rose Matthys, and Michael T'Kach

East Isles residents and invited guests were also in attendance.

EIRA President Mark Lofstrom called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Announcements

Mark Lofstrom announced that he will be moving from the neighborhood and will need to resign as EIRA President by the end of the year.

Minneapolis Public Housing Authority

Rita Ytzen and Cynthia Yuen from Minneapolis Public Housing Authority announced a new program called Mobility Voucher Program. This program encourages low-income families to move to areas non-concentrated by race and poverty as they seek to find safe, decent and affordable housing in an environment conducive to breaking the cycle of poverty. East Isles is one of these neighborhoods. The program is targeting families who are on a waiting list for housing assistance. To qualify for this program, families must maintain full-time employment and commit to moving to and staying in a non-impact neighborhood for a minimum of three years. Eligible families also must have at least one minor child living in the household. A goal of this program is to help connect participating families with resources in the new communities so the families can be successful.

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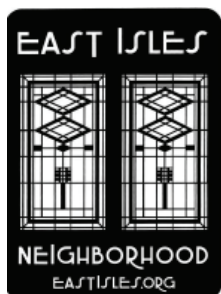
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East Isles Residents Association thanks the following local businesses for their generous donations of goods and services during 2010.

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December 2010

Thanks for Making the Wine Tasting a Huge Success!

We would like to send out a BIG THANK YOU to all who participated in this year's Hennepin Lake Wine Taster. It was a huge success and raised money for the participating neighborhoods. We appreciate your support of our neighborhoods and hope you'll participate in next year's Wine Taster.

Sign up for Snow Emergency Alerts!

Winter is upon us and this means snow, snow and more snow! There are a variety of ways to get Snow Emergency alerts from the City of Minneapolis. You can receive snow alerts through the city's Facebook page, Twitter page, through email or text messaging. If you have a land line, you will automatically receive a Snow Emergency alert phone call.

To sign up for any of these, please visit the city's Snow Emergency webpage and click on one of the

Leslie Foremen, Aide to Meg Tuthill, Ward 10 Councilmember, City of Minneapolis

Leslie attended on behalf of Meg Tuthill and brought the following updates:

The second and final public meeting regarding the City's budget will be Monday, December 13, 6:05 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall. The Council will vote on the budget after the public testimony.

Public Works is moving forward with changes to the Midtown Greenway in East Isles, removing the stop sign for trail users at James Avenue. Stop signs for trail users at Irving and Humboldt will remain in place. Public works will be making some changes to signage and improving lighting at these intersections. Some work may not happen until Spring 2011.

The development at Lake and Knox is moving forward. Demolition of the houses started today.

Sign up for snow emergency alerts. They are a variety of ways to receive the alerts (including robo calls, e-mail, Facebook and Twitter). Get all the information at the City's snow emergency webpage: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/snow/. The City also maintains the snow emergency hotline: 612-348-SNOW.

The next "Meet with Meg" is Tuesday, December 14, 12-1 p.m. at the 5th Precinct, 3101 Nicollet Avenue. Bring your own lunch. Meg provides beverages and dessert.

The City is working on a budget deal that may limit the property tax increase to 4.7% (vs. the proposed 7.5%). One way the City may accomplish this is by tapping any un-contracted NRP funds. This could affect

EIRA to page 11

options on the left sidebar.

Public Comment on the 2011 Budget & Levy

Please join the Ways & Means/Budget Committee for the Public Comment meeting for the 2011 budget and levy on Monday, December 13th at 6:05pm at City Hall Council Chambers. This is an opportunity to voice your concerns and ideas for the city's proposed budget for next year.

Please Use Lights and Reflectors when Biking

We would like to send out a reminder to the bikers in our ward. With the days getting darker earlier, please remember to use lights and reflectors when out riding your bike. We love to see people continuing to bike, even in the impending cold weather, and we want to make each of you are safe and seen by other drivers.

100% Participation in CES Program in Ward 10!

We are very happy to report that the 10th ward is the first ward to achieve 100% participation by our neighborhoods in the Community Energy Service (CES) program. Thank you so much for each neighborhood's efforts to bring this program to our residents.

This program works with homeowners to increase energy efficiency and cut energy costs in homes. Watch your neighborhood newspaper for more information on upcoming workshops.

Get Ready for Winter

Are you a tenant, landlord or home owner who is worried about the price of heating costs this winter? If so, call Community Action of Minneapolis to see if you qualify for their weatherization or energy assistance programs.

For more information, please call Community Action of Minneapolis at 612-335-5911.

South Transfer Station Vouchers

To support our customers who are cleaning or improving their property, Solid Waste & Recycling offers vouchers for disposal of household debris at our South Transfer Station. Vouchers are for materials from properties within Minneapolis only. Minneapolis reserves the right to an on site inspection of the property before approving voucher. You may request up to six vouchers per year for disposal of excess garbage, appliances, and construction and demolition debris. You may also request up to two tire vouchers per year (eight tires per voucher). The South Transfer Station is located at 2850 20th Ave S. For more info, visit Solid Waste Voucher webpage

Meet with Meg!

Join us for Meet with Meg for lunch on Tuesday, December 14th from 12 pm to 1 pm at the 5th Precinct's Community Room (3101 Nicollet Ave S). Meet with Meg is a time for you to talk with her, ask questions, and voice concerns. Bring your sack lunch! Cookies and lemonade will be provided! Meet with Meg will be held the second Tuesday of every month.

As always, we are looking for your input on who you would like to see/hear from at Meet with Meg for Lunch. We would like to start inviting local and city officials to Meet with Meg in the new year and we need your help! If you have any ideas of whom you would like to hear from or of a topic that is of interest to you, please email 10th ward associate Breanna Patsch at breanna.patsch@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

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EIRA CONTINUED

East Isles NRP Phase II funding because none of those dollars are under contract. Any NRP funds that are under contract with neighborhoods will remain as planned. We will know the outcome after the December 13th budget vote.

Treasurer's Report

EIRA Treasurer Al Rodriguez gave a financial update.

Bank balances as of 12-7-10 are:

Checking	\$3,827.05
Savings	\$10,036.29
NRP Checking	\$12,112.39

The wine tasting revenue to date is \$850. We are waiting for the check for the money collected at the door (EIRA will receive 25% of that total).

There were no EIRA expenses since the November report. NRP expenses totaled \$620.30, which includes advertising in the Hill and Lake Press and Monica's wages and expenses.

EIRA received \$210 in membership dues and donations since the November report.

NRP report, Monica Smith, East Isles NRP Coordinator

The NRP Steering Committee has been working on a proposal to Center for Energy and Environment to bring their Community Energy Services (CES) program to East Isles. The Committee recommended that we launch the program in March so residents can take advantage of cost saving this winter. The Board voted to approve the date of March 10, 2010 for the energy workshop. We are looking for a venue in East Isles to accommodate about 80 people.

The committee is also working on formatting the raw data from the survey so we have usable information. The next meeting of the Steering Committee is Tuesday, December 14th, 7 p.m. at Grace-Trinity Community Church.

US Bank proposal for Hennepin and Franklin

Mark Lofstrom reported that EIRA's Zoning and Land Use Committee met with US Bank representatives on November 22nd to review their plans to relocate their branch from 2546 Hennepin to the Minneapolis Floral building at Hennepin and Fremont Avenues. They would like to expand their services in a larger space and include parking for employees and customers.

Christine Hobrough, US Bank; Carol Lansing, Faegre & Benson; and Sean Rabroin, HTG Architects presented to the EIRA Board. The project will include maintaining the original structure and the original character of the building on the corner. The greenhouse and garages will be removed to make room for a 15-car parking lot. They will not offer drive-through.

The parcel is currently zoned as residential and commercial. The bank is requesting a minor subdivision of the property to divide the residential from the commercial properties to allow for two driveways for the separate properties (they currently share one driveway). The subdivision will rezone the area for the driveway from R4 to C2. A landscape buffer will divide the driveways. US Bank is not asking for any other CUPs or variances in the project.

US Bank needs approvals on these changes from the City before completing the purchase of the property. They will go before the Planning Commission in

January. They hope to open in the new location in late September 2011. US Bank will sell the home on the residential parcel.

EIRA's Zoning and Land Use Committee recommended that the Board support the US Bank project. The Board voted unanimously to do so.

Stop sign at 24th and Fremont

There is currently a 2-way stop at the intersection of 24th Street and Fremont Avenue. The intersection is confusing and dangerous. EIRA Board voted unanimously to support a recommendation by EIRA's Zoning and Land Use Committee to change that intersection to a 4-way stop. Leslie Foreman reported that Meg Tuthill has not taken a position on the change and that the City Traffic department discourages the use of 4-way stops, as they do not believe that they are safer than a 2-way stop. Meg Tuthill's office will invite representatives from the Traffic department to attend the January EIRA Board meeting to discuss this option further. Residents surrounding the intersection will be encouraged to attend the meeting to offer opinions.

EIRA Board Votes

The Board has a number of items for review:

Neighborhood Policing Plan: Al Rodriguez will be EIRA's point person for the Neighborhood Policing Plan. Issues include graffiti and theft from property. We may ask for more patrols through the neighborhood to curtail these problems. If you spot graffiti in the neighborhood, please report it to 311 (e-mailing a photo of the graffiti to 311 is also helpful).

Al reminded everyone that the Lakes Area Crime and Safety meetings are held the second Thursday of every month from 6:30-7:30 p.m., at Lund's, 1450 West Lake Street (community conference room). The public is invited.

The Board unanimously voted to make an annual donation of \$750 to the Hill and Lake Press. EIRA

Board meeting minutes are published monthly in the publication.

The Board unanimously voted to approved a \$110 donation toward the installation of two additional bike racks at Tao Foods (22nd Street and Hennepin Avenue).

The Board unanimously approved the Bylaws Committee to work on changing the bylaws to meet the current needs and allow for smooth operation for the coming year. Updates may include electronic voting measures and changes to accommodate the new NCR guidelines. The Board approved the committee members: Tina Frontera (Chair), Jane Schommer, Rosita Acosta, Ross D'Emanuele, Nancy Johnston, and Linda Schutz. The next meeting is Thursday, December 16th, and all are welcome.

The Board unanimously approved EIRA's Zoning and Land Use Committee's charge to monitor relevant issues in the neighborhood. The committee will continue to meet quarterly and on an as-need basis as issues arise. The Board approved the committee members: Mark Lofstrom, Jane Schommer, Helen Ackerman, Rosita Acosta, Sue Durfee, Harvey Ettinger, Allan Amis, Karen Carney, Nancy Johnston; and appointed new member Steve Havig.

The Board voted unanimously to elect Jane Schommer as EIRA President, effective December 26th. Jane stated that there is a possibility that she may be moving from the neighborhood in Spring 2011 but will serve as president until such time. The Board will take up the issue of filling the Vice President position in January.

The Board thanked Mark Lofstrom for his valued service and commitment to the neighborhood.

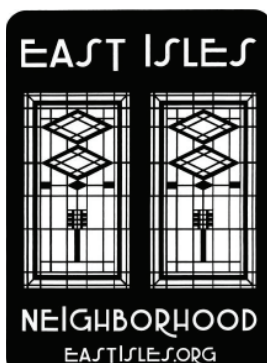
The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

**Join your neighbors for these East Isles events!****EIRA Board of Directors Meeting**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 7:00 P.M.
Grace-Trinity Community Church
1430 W. 28th Street

Learn about events and issues in our neighborhood. East Isles residents and property or business owners are invited to attend the meeting of the EIRA Board of Directors.

For more information, please contact EIRA President, Jane Schommer at janeschommer@gmail.com.

**East Isles NRP Steering Committee**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 7:00 P.M.
Grace-Trinity Community Church
1430 W. 28th Street

Join the Steering Committee, a sub-committee or stop by to voice your opinions. All are welcome. Contact Monica Smith at nrp@eastisles.org for details.

Ice Skating Social

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 2011, 1:00-3:00 P.M.
Lake of the Isles Ice Rink
East Lake of the Isles Parkway at 26th Street

You are invited to join your East Isles, Lowry Hill and Kenwood neighbors for an ice skating social. Bring your skates and enjoy a warm fire, coffee, hot chocolate and cookies.

Questions? Please contact Amy Sanborn at 612-354-2982.



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Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA)

By Janis Clay, Secretary

Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association Board Minutes Tuesday, December 7, 2010

Kenwood Recreation Center

Attendees: Janet Hallaway, President; Craig Wilson, Vice President; Dan Aronson, Treasurer; Janis Clay, Secretary; Kathy Byrn; Jimmy Fogel; Maggie Thurer; Melissa Omafray Townley; David Schelzel; David Weinstein; Brian Meeker; Mark Brauer; Marty Broan; Brian Austin.

Guests: Lisa Goodman, Seventh Ward City Council Representative; Michael McLaughlin, Urban Works, Executive Director; Lee Rosenthal; Barbara Fogel; Janice Gepner; Marge Schwier; one guest whose sign in was illegible.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by President Janet Hallaway, noting a quorum was present.

Distribution/Approval of Minutes/Agenda: Melissa Omafray Townley moved and Jimmy Fogel seconded a motion to approve the agenda. Motion passed. Mark Brauer moved and Jimmy Fogel seconded approval of the minutes of the Tuesday, November 9, 2010, Board Meeting. Motion passed.

Introductions and Community Announcements: Board members and guests introduced themselves and each named a favorite area restaurant. Duplex on Hennepin received lots of mentions!

People are encouraged to visit our website at www.lowryhillneighborhood.org, where they can sign up to receive LHNA's monthly E-Blast about events in the neighborhood.

Seventh Ward City Council Representative Lisa Goodman distributed invitations to the December "Later with Lisa" event Thursday, December 9th, 2010 from 5:00 to 7:00 at the Normandy. She discussed at length the many factors leading to recent significant property tax increases and possible steps to address the situation, and distributed a detailed written piece. She

encouraged those wanting more information to contact her office at (612) 673-2207. Her written information will be posted on the LHNA website.

Treasurer's Report: Dan Aronson gave the Treasurer's Report. LHNA is in good shape financially. Bills are paid and money is in the bank.

South Hennepin Business Association Presentation: Michael McLaughlin, Executive Director, Urban Works, gave a presentation on a program funded by the South Hennepin Business Association to rebrand the Hennepin Avenue business district, the commercial area spanning Hennepin Avenue from 28th Street to Lincoln Ave. This section lacks a distinct identity. McLaughlin is proposing to brand the district the "Lowry Hill District." Technically, Lowry Hill starts at 22nd St. and runs to 394. McLaughlin presented a retail banner concept which would be installed on 150 light poles. Board sentiment was mixed on the concept.

LRT Update: Craig Wilson presented an update on LRT planning. He attended a Southwest LRT Design Charrette, held November 14, 2010, sponsored by the Cedar Lake Park Association. This was a brainstorming session on the proposed LRT stations, and included professionals such as designers, architects, and landscape architects. Craig presented photos and drawings of the various design proposals.

Bike Rack Matching Program: The Bike Rack Matching Program has been turned over to the Environment committee. Five or six people will look at sites and make recommendations over the next 60 days or so.

Zoning and Planning Update: David Weinstein reported that progress is being made on using artwork from Kenwood School students in the empty Burch Pharmacy windows. US Bank is planning to purchase and renovate the Minneapolis Floral site. Proposed

plans appear to be sensitive to the history and aesthetics of the site and congestion and parking issues. David attended a presentation on a University of Minnesota study of the Conservation District concept in the Prospect Park neighborhood. A written report is forthcoming, which he will circulate. The plan to add green space to the Walker/Douglas concrete median has made progress. MN Dot has assigned a project manager, and is doing soil testing and study to determine what could be planted there. Janet has an application to submit a plan for the space and its future maintenance.

Website Update: Melissa Omafray Townley reported good progress on the LHNA website, including progress on the business directory. She is working on improving navigation on the site. She encouraged everyone to visit the website and pass along businesses for inclusion in the directory and emails for the E-Blast!

The Bridge: Melissa reported that the Bridge, a shelter for youth in crisis, does great work, and has been a good neighbor addressing any problems that have come up. They are facing tough financial times, and she encouraged donations.

Lakes Area Ice Skating Social: The annual Lakes Area Ice Skating Social will take place at the Isles Skating rink on Sunday, January 23, 2011. Mark Brauer moved and Marty Broan seconded a motion to approve a contribution from LHNA of up to \$250.00 for refreshments and firewood.

Staff: The Board discussed the possibility of hiring a part-time staff person for clerical and miscellaneous tasks. Discussion will take place in the next few months on this topic.

LHNA's next board meeting will be held Tuesday January 4, 2011, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Kenwood Rec Center. All residents are welcome. The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)

By Steve Gove

CIDNA December 7, 2010 Board Meeting

The board and friends from the neighborhood gathered at 6 pm to celebrate Ken Moritz's many years of service to the community, as a CIDNA board member, and as a member of other community organizations.

The Board moved next to business.

Councilmember Lisa Goodman delivered her report and fielded questions from attendees. She addressed the proposed reduction in the property tax levy attributable to City and Park Board activities, mentioning that the City portion of the total property tax was about 34%. Other taxes go to Hennepin County and the School District, which have not so proposed any such reduction. She listed some of the drivers of the increase in taxes, including pension fund liabilities. Another factor leading to increased property taxes has been the reduction in state funds transferred to the city.

Gail Lee, Ed Bell, Steve Goltry and Claire Ruebeck reviewed the NRP committee's proposal for NRP Phase 2. Gail noted that \$100,000 still remain from NRP Phase 1.

The components of the Phase 2 plan are detailed on CIDNA's web-site, www.cidna.org. NRP Phase 2 requires that 70% of the funds allotted to the neighborhood be devoted to housing initiatives. The plan proposed by the committee allocated the required amount, \$183,000, to non-profit organizations that

provide low cost mortgage loans. Ultimately, CIDNA can recover the mortgage principal, and subsequent use of that capital would not be restricted to housing initiatives.

Some NRP funds would also go to subsidizing energy audits for homeowners in the neighborhood. This will reduce, or perhaps eliminate, cost to the homeowners. Energy audits provide information on ways to decrease energy consumption based on an on-site evaluation of the property.

Given the significant amount of work needed to support NRP programs, the committee also proposed hiring a coordinator, and has chosen Monica Smith to fill the role. She already fills a similar role for other neighborhood organizations, including East Calhoun and East Isles.

One area of the plan is "community building". Money in this category will fund social events, such as the CIDNA Fall Festival. It will also contribute to Hill and Lake Press.

Safety spending is also in the budget, including initiatives to reduce speeding in the neighborhood. Other budget items address the maintenance of healthy trees, and improvements to South Beach.

As required by NRP administration, all residents for whom CIDNA had mail addresses, had been notified of the availability of the NRP proposal, and invited to vote on the proposal, either by mail or by attending the Dec. 7, 2010 CIDNA Board Meeting. Approximately 25 residents and Board members were present, and an overwhelming majority voted to approve the CIDNA NRP committee's proposal. Next step is to present the plan to the NRP Policy Board for approval in January.

Art Higinbotham and Ed Ferlauto shared information coming out of meetings relating to the Southwest LRT. There is no resolution of where freight rail will go once LRT is in place. Although Saint Louis Park had agreed to the rerouting of freight rail to the spur line

that passes near St. Louis Park High school, there is growing objection to that routing in that community. Kenilworth is now recommended as the "locally preferred alternative." However, co-location options are expensive, and require more land than many in the community expected. Art, Ed, and other interested parties have been meeting with neighborhoods surrounding the Kenilworth route: West Calhoun, CIDNA, Kenwood/Isles and Lowry Hill.

John Erickson also spoke. He is a member of the Park Board Community Action Committee looking at the impact of Southwest LRT on park land. The forthcoming document from the CAC addresses general principals that should be followed, not details. The Park Board web-site provides information on meetings and documents.

Ed Ferlauto reported that Station Planning meetings so far have left the decision on a Park and Ride lot at the West Lake St. station (near Whole Foods) unresolved. This must be deferred until after a traffic study. He noted that station planning must consider the impact on property within half a mile radius of the station. He has also attended meetings where creative proposals for making the station more appealing have been discussed. Proposals have included towers on the Lake Street bridge permitting access directly from Lake St. to the station, a green roof and landscaping. The meetings have also addressed changes to the area where the tracks will cross Cedar Lake Parkway. These meetings have addressed noise and aesthetic considerations.

A joint resolution from the four neighborhoods surrounding the Kenilworth route was presented to the CIDNA board. Among other items it recommends no co-location of freight and LRT in the Kenilworth corridor. Glenna Case moved the Board approve the resolution. David Shirley seconded. The Board voted to approve.

Ryan Fox has reported on his review of the

CIDNA to page 14

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KENWOOD ISLES AREA ASSOCIATION

BY AMY LUCAS

December 2010 KIAA Meeting Minutes

KIAA Board meeting was held December 6, 2010.

Vice-Chair Pat Scott called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Board Members present: Vice-Chair, Pat Scott, Mike Bono, Jeanette Colby, Amy Lucas, Kathy Low, Larry Moran, Ed Pluimer, Eric Sjoding, Kathy Williams and Roy Williams.

Others present: Dennis Gimmestad, historian MnDOT; Lisa Goodman, City Council 7th Ward; Maggie Mercil, Kenwood Rec Center director; Charlie Lazor, resident; Tom Clarke, E. Isles resident; Doug Peterson, resident of Cedar Lake Shores townhomes.

Historic Review Process of SW LRT – Dennis Gimmestad, Historian, MnDOT

Dennis Gimmestad was invited by KIAA to explain the SW LRT historic properties review i.e. Sec 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 that allows federal agencies to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), funders and interested parties. The Sec 106 review process will identify historic properties; identify the effects of the proposed project on historic resources; mitigate effects on historic resources.

Federal Transit Authority (FTA) has contracted with Henn Co and MnDot to begin initial study of SW LRT. MnDot historic resources dept is responsible for the historic review process of the SW LRT. The Sec 106 review and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) are separate, but there is an attempt to coordinate processes for SW LRT. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) comments have been forwarded to the Sec 106 review process.

FTA has approved KIAA as a “consulting party” to the Section 106 process. For more information on the historic review process visit: <http://www.achp.gov/docs/CitizenGuide.pdf>.

At this time, the SW LRT historic review process is focused on identification of historic properties. Archaeological assessment for all five segments of the SW LRT is complete and SHPO has concurred with the recommendation. These recommendations will be in the DEIS. Generally, it is recommended that 10 areas in Segment A (approximately runs from Whole Foods to Twins Stadium) have further archeological research/sampling. The 10 areas total 64 acres; 42 acres are in the SW LRT affected area. Further research will be conducted after the spring thaw.

Met Council hires the historic consultants and MnDot historic resources div. monitors the work.

The historic property survey was contracted with multiple historic consultants and is not complete. One

historic consultant reviewed the suburban areas. A separate consultant, specializing in railroad histories, surveyed the rail corridor and lines and concluded the Great Northern line (behind Bryn Mawr neighborhood) is the only rail line in the survey area that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); it has been determined that the rail line through Kenwood is not eligible for the NRHP.

The survey of the Minneapolis standing-structures and properties is underway. There appear to be two historic contexts: properties associated with the Grand Rounds park system and early residential properties. It is recommended that the NRHP eligible properties associated with the Grand Rounds include Cedar Lake, Cedar Lake Pkwy, Kenilworth Lagoon, Kenwood Pkwy including Water Tower, and Lake of the Isles Blvd; each of these elements will be reviewed for effects. Consultants also recommend further research (Phase 2 level) of six homes in Kenwood. Interested KIAA members were asked to meet with Gimmestad to further discuss Kenwood historic resources.

Treasurer’s Report – Roy Williams

KIAA paid \$500 towards PALIO in November

City Council 7th Ward Update – Lisa Goodman

Property taxes have been the latest City Hall issue: the City controls 34% of the total property tax bill. City tax increase is certified at 7.5%, but current City budget is based on a 6.5% levy. The City’s actual budget hasn’t increased, but LGA (Local Government Aid) funds have been cut and “bills” have risen including pensions and TIF (Tax Increment Financing) districts. Mayor Rybak recently sent an email to his website members explaining the budget. City Council will adopt final budget in Dec.

KIAA Website Discussion – Kathy Williams

Bruce Camp has offered to submit a formal proposal to update the KIAA website; KIAA Communications

Committee will discuss further.

SW LRT Freight Location – Larry MorByan

Henn Co. has proposed to direct freight rail into St. Louis Park with significant opposition. Henn Co held an informational meeting on Nov. 29 to review freight location alternatives. The Kenilworth Corridor and Midtown Greenway alternatives require “takings” and construction at estimated costs of \$60 million each. The freight relocation must be resolved before LRT can move forward and more meetings are anticipated.

SW LRT Station Area Planning/LRT Issues – Jeanette Colby

Charlie Lazor, KIAA resident and architect, described the Cedar Lake Park Association-supported design charette in November. Charette results will be presented in the upcoming Hill and Lake Press.

Doug Peterson, resident of Cedar Lake Shores townhomes, expressed concern that the neighborhoods need to work together and speak as one voice.

Jeanette Colby presented the “Joint Goals for SW LRT Design and Mitigation” that have been drafted by n’hood groups to adopt. KIAA will discuss further at Jan. 3 meeting.

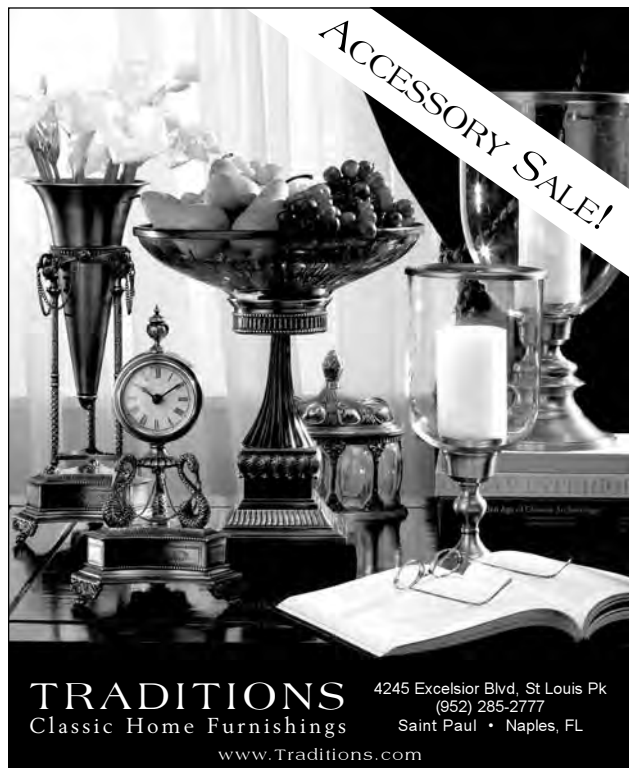
Updates

Kenwood “tot lot” was almost completed before the snow fall.

Henn Co has chosen architect, Vincent James Associates, for new Walker Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Reminder: The next KIAA Board meeting will be Monday, January 3 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Kenwood Rec Center. The public is welcome to attend these monthly meetings.



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Hill & Lake Press

www.hillandlakepress.com
 Hill & Lake Press email address:
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 and phone number: 612-377-5785

HILL AND LAKE PRESS ANNUAL MEETING

By Anita Tabb

The annual meeting of the Hill and Lake Press (HLP) was held on Monday, November 8, 2010, at the home of Jean Deatruck and John Gridley.

In attendance were: Dorothy Childers, Harvey Ettinger, Steve Kotvis, Joyce and Ron Murphy, Barb and Jimmy Fogel, Judy Berge, Kathy Williams, Jean Deatruck, John Gridley, and Anita Tabb.

The minutes from the 2009 meeting were moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.

Jean Deatruck, HLP Editor, reported the following information:

Overall, the health of HLP is sound. Not only is the paper serving its constituency but the advertisers continuing to place ads with enough frequency that outpaces expenses. At times, working with color ads can be challenging. The price of publishing has increased which requires that almost 40% of the paper is dedicated to advertising.

Photography at specific community events covered by HLP is done by Dorothy Childers. Whenever there are events to be photographed please make sure Dorothy or Jean Deatruck is notified.

The current distributor is working well with staff. He is receptive to calls when issues arise or problems occur and he delivers the papers in plastic bags when warranted by the weather.

The monthly columns were discussed. Madeleine Lowry has taken that column formerly written by Beth Kehoe and feedback on Madeleine's column has been good. Tom Cook still writes a column and HLP continues to receive compliments on this column. Since Tom no longer lives in the neighborhood, there was discussion about whether he should continue to be a columnist but the decision to retain his column was supported overwhelmingly. The education article written monthly by Steve Kotvis is very much appreciated by the neighborhood because it keeps constituents informed about Minneapolis Public Schools. Steve has committed to continue being a monthly contributor on this topic for another year. The "Meet Your Neighbor" column written by Craig Wilson is also a big hit and will continue. Because authors of HLP columns and articles represent all areas of the newspaper's covered area, the HLP Board felt confident that many voices are being heard. The neighborhoods being covered by HLP include: Kenwood, East Isles, Cedar Isles-Dean and Lowry Hill.

Occasionally, an outside Ad Rep will ask to represent us to advertisers. In that situation, the Ad Rep finds advertisers to place ads in HLP and then receives payment for the finding these advertisers. The question posed to the board was whether this type of arrangement should be used. After discussion about how this would work and whether it was necessary, the following motion was made: Keep number and income of ads at about current levels and do not use an external Ad Rep to seek additional advertising dollars, thereby obligating HLP to pay a commission. This motion was passed unanimously.

John Gridley, HLP Financial Officer, reported the following information regarding the financial status of HLP:

The monthly press run is 6,000 copies, of which over 95% is distributed in the neighborhoods.

The goal of HLP is to break even, and rates are set accordingly. For the fiscal year ending August 31, 2010, HLP made \$883.00. In the previous FY, HLP lost \$3,000.00 including \$1000 from a deadbeat advertiser.

Last year, when HLP lost money, 35% of column inches were advertising. Increasing this to 37%-40% in 2010, and increasing advertising rates 10% allowed us to return to profitability.

Collections this year have not been as slow as they were last year. So far this year, HLP has had one small advertiser who has declared bankruptcy and will require a \$150 write-off.



Hill & Lake Press
 2101 West Franklin, Minneapolis,
 MN 55405
 www.hillandlakepress.com

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 January 10, 2011

Since March 1976, Hill & Lake Press has served the community as a non-profit newspaper staffed by volunteers. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Hill & Lake Press.

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Hill & Lake Press is a non profit newspaper and funded and supported by its advertisers and neighborhood associations: East Isles Residents Association (EIRA); Kenwood Isles Area Association (KIAA); Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA); and Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA).

Hill & Lake Press welcomes stories, poetry, articles, photos, and ideas. Please direct contributions and advertising queries to Jean Deatruck at 612-377-5785 or hillandlakepress@bitstream.net

Hill & Lake Press is a volunteer newspaper. We appreciate your patience when calling or emailing.

Real Estate ads average 75% of HLP advertising revenue.

Each neighborhood contributes \$750 annually to HLP. In return, we publish the minutes of their meetings at no charge. If we charged them normal rates, each would pay approximately \$2500 annually instead of only \$750.

The ad rate for color ads has been lowered about 25%. By increasing the number of color pages, HLP can also print more color pictures.

Because we are currently profitable HLP will maintain the same advertising rates in 2011 as in 2010.

HLP is using higher quality paper this year, and has received favorable comments about it from both readers and advertisers.

Jimmy Fogel moved to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Steve Kotvis. The vote was unanimous.

CIDNA from page 12

Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for the sewer force main improvements project. Based on responses to the EAW the Project Manager, Debra Moynihan, finds that there are no responses to the EAW that require creating a further Environmental Impact Study. Ryan and other members of the community will wait to review the Engineering Document from the Metropolitan Council, and look for issues there. Ryan is working to gather information on the feasibility of burying existing infrastructure: wires, etc., from Chown to Depot. He is also gathering information on costs for providing sidewalks in that block.

The board meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30.

Where we are Now.

By Jean Deatruck, Editor

Everything seemed bigger in our youthful memories. We have all heard stories of blizzards with drifts that were taller than children and how children walked to school in such weather. I remember huge snowstorms in the early 80s where backing down my Colfax drive was like being in a tunnel. And the biggie was the Halloween snowstorm. We were in California at the time and I sometimes feel left out when I hear neighbors talk of that huge storm. Everyone has tales to tell: a friend's father walked from downtown to Linden Hills, another was stuck in a stalled car for hours. The stories are similar to the stories we have heard about the famous blizzard of 1941.

And now we have a real blizzard again. I was happy to be able to observe the blowing snow from my windows while working on HLP. Cars lined up 6 at a time trying to move down Dupont unsuccessfully. The scene included people walking with shovels to find and dig out their cars before the tow trucks found them.

May you have a joyous and wintry holiday season.

SNOW SHOVELING RULES

Keeping our sidewalks free of ice and snow is the neighborly thing to do, and it's the law. For your own benefit and to help your neighbors, people pushing strollers or using wheelchairs, and the many people in Minneapolis who walk, please do your part.

Minneapolis Ordinance requires that property owners clear sidewalks after the end of a snowfall within 24 hours for homes and duplexes; four daytime hours for apartment and commercial buildings (daytime hours begin at 8 am)

Shovel the sidewalks on all sides of your property, the full width of the sidewalk down to the bare pavement. Remove all ice from sidewalks. After the sidewalk is cleared, sprinkling a little sand can help prevent

Snow Shoveling to page 15

HILL LAKE PRESS Real Estate Sales November 2010											
STREET ADDRESS	ORIGINAL PRICE	Seller Contrib	DAYS MKT	SALE PRICE	TYPE	BED BATH	SQ FT	TAX VALUE	PROP TAX	YR BLT	
1425 28th St W #118	\$ 165,500		360	\$ 117,500	C	2/2	1020	\$ 138,000	\$ 2,153	1986	
1770 Bryant S #401	184,000	5,145	294	171,500	C	2/2	1,184	231,900	3,388	1968	
2212 Fremont S #5	274,900		339	239,000	C	1/2	1,290	244,000	3,536	1900	
3151 Dean Ct #304	288,900		100	240,000	C	2/2	1,360	274,500	3,896	1983	
1925 Dupont S #3	299,900	7,650	206	255,000	C	3/1	1,550	251,000	3,541	1912	
3116 W Lake St #523	299,900		1	275,000	C	1/1	1,060	288,500	4,203	2007	
3116 W Lake St #416	319,900		435	305,000	C	2/2	1,254	333,900	4,865	2007	
3104 W Lake St #202	399,900	5,000	435	350,000	C	2/2	1,500	373,000	5,434	2007	
3812 Cedar Lake Place	699,900		53	650,000	H	4/3	3,978	700,000	10,834	1997	
1935 Penn S	995,000	22,500	1	940,000	H	3/3	2,357	793,000	12,485	1954	
2728 Upton S	1,275,000		10	1,150,000	H	4/5	4,185	754,000	11,792	1925	
2700 Kenilworth Place	2,275,000		123	2,100,000	H	3/4	3,826	1,875,500	31,696	1994	
Sources: Harvey Ettinger Broker Reciprocity Websites / Hennepin County					Condo Home Townhouse						
(Go to mpisrealtor.com for additional info)											

Holiday Guilt-O-Rama

By Madeleine Lowry

I think most of us would agree that the end of the year is a stressful time, at least for adults. It was really poor planning on someone's part that the end of the fiscal year coincides with several major holidays. (I feel fairly sure that a woman would not have made this grave logistical mistake.)



Madeleine Lowry

Each day that passes in December contributes to a rising sense of panic at all that remains to be accomplished. It's safe to say that we are all doing too much—gifts, holiday cards, parties, holiday shows, house guests, entertaining, travelling, baking and cooking, in addition to attendance at all the requisite school performances. Not to mention charitable donations, end of year tallies for reimbursement accounts and those lovely fourth quarter estimated taxes.

All this hurry scurry at a dark time of year leads to a palpable feeling of holiday guilt that comes in more flavors than ice cream at Sebastian Joe's.

Let's just start with holiday light display guilt, shall we? It ranges from we-don't-have-enough-twinkly-lights-in-the-front-yard guilt to yikes-my-holiday-lighting-display-has-enlarged-my-carbon-footprint-to-the-size-of-a-747 guilt. I'll let you decide where you fall on that continuum.

Then there is shoveling guilt. There's the please-

excuse-me-for-not-shoveling-sooner-but-we-have-a-service-that-does-that-and-they-are-always-late guilt. And also the I'm-afraid-I-shoveled-too-much-too-soon-and-now-the-residue-has-frozen-slick-as-glass guilt.

Entertaining around the holidays brings its own brand of guilt. There's the banal but omnipresent do-we-have-enough-food/wine guilt and also the so-sorry-we-couldn't-invite-everyone-but-you-know-how-it-is guilt. There is also the more rarified we-thought-it-would-be-cute-to-tie-a-camel-out-in-the-front-yard-for-this-party-and-now-he-looks-a-bit-cold-poor-dear guilt.

Hosting houseguests induces still more shades of guilt. There's the generic wish-the-house-was-cleaner-but-Heloise-does-not-live-here guilt. When your household includes teenagers you may be primed for not-enough-hot-water-for-everyone guilt. And, when your guests are starting to look haggard or bored, there is the burden of oh-dear-we-may-have-planned-too-much (or too little) guilt.

When you are woefully behind in sending your holiday cards and realize that it would have been more appropriate to have them printed with "Happy Valentine's Day" rather than "Happy Holidays," you are experiencing another kind of holiday guilt.

But, the lion's share of guilt this time of year revolves around gift giving. There's I'm-lying-to-my-kids-about-Santa guilt. I-have-so-much-shopping-still-

left-to-do-that-I'm-going-to-give-everyone-the-same-thing-this-year guilt. (I know, it is tempting.) Then there's the I-didn't-know-what-to-get-you-so-I-got-you-something-I-would-like guilt. And also the I-wasn't-expecting-a-gift-from-you-and-don't-have-anything-to-give-in-return guilt. And how about I-bought-this-book-for-you-but-read-some-of-it-before-wrapping-it guilt. (Yeah, I'm definitely guilty of this!)

And what about forgetting-someone-on-your-list guilt? Or underwhelming-gift-wrap guilt? Or even I-didn't-bake-it-all-from-scratch guilt? We could go on and on.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that you are the only one operating in a fog of holiday guilt. Once you know what to look for, you'll see the signs everywhere. Holiday guilt manifests itself in the form of intense cravings for carbs (cookies, cakes, candy), epic traffic jams at shopping malls and a sudden fondness for Lorie Line Christmas CDs.

In my experience the only antidotes are heavy doses of dark chocolate, online shopping binges and a dramatic lowering of all your personal standards—including timeliness, cleanliness, and perfectness!

As we make the dazzling streak towards Christmas, I will you all the best of luck!

Pray that we survive 'til January.

Snow Shoveling from page 14

slipping on frosty sidewalks. Pile snow into your yard and boulevard. It's against the law to shovel snow into streets and alleys. If you have corner property, clear curb cuts at corners and crosswalks to the street gutter.

If the City of Minneapolis gets a complaint or discovers that a sidewalk is not properly cleared, Public Works will inspect the sidewalk and give the property owners a chance to clear it.

If the sidewalk has not been cleared upon re-inspection, the property owner may be issued a citation with a

fine. Crews will remove the snow and ice from the sidewalk. Property owners will be billed for this service, and unpaid bills will be added to property tax statements.

You are as responsible for clearing ice on your sidewalk as well as snow; ice can be more dangerous and intimidating than snow. The sooner and more completely you shovel, the less likely ice will form.

Arrange for someone to shovel while you are on vacation. Shovel around your garbage carts and recycling bins. If you don't, the City will do it for you and

charge a fee.

For a fee, community groups shovel snow for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Call (612) 673-3004 for a list of these groups. The City offers free sidewalk sand for Minneapolis residents.

Report snow and ice on sidewalks. Are there neighbors on your street who are elderly, have a disability or may have a hard time shoveling for any reason? Work with your neighbors to give a hand and ensure your entire block is safe and accessible to all.



Wishing you a wondrous holiday season!

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sand upon the waters

By Tom H. Cook

If you don't like Mexicans, why did you move here?

— Bumper sticker, San Pancho, Mexico

Ben is like Tom, only mature.

— Comment from a long time family friend

We all want our children to exceed us; I just thought it would take a little longer.

—My toast at Ben's wedding

San Francisco, nicknamed San Pancho, is a little town of about a thousand, on the Pacific Ocean an hour north of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. It is a beautiful place to get married. Our son Ben and his sweetheart Erin invited fifty lucky folks to witness and participate in their wedding this past Thanksgiving. Instead of a holiday of tepid turkey, dry stuffing, surly relatives, and endless football games, we enjoyed a moving, joyful ceremony on the beach at sunset.

The "kids" (each 28) met during their first year of college and have been together ever since. Organizationally I would have difficulty getting three couples together for a pot luck. Erin and Ben planned, coordinated and hosted a stupendous week in a foreign country 2,000 miles away. Their younger friends went snorkeling, horseback riding on the beach, and exploring the local night life. They also lined up enough adventure and challenge to delight the crew of potentially grumpy old people. There were welcome parties, swimming in an infinity pool a hundred feet above the ocean, a rehearsal dinner, lunches, and free time (read naps) for those so inclined. There was a wild bachelor party that through a comedy of errors my invitation was lost. Except for that, the flow of events was seamless.

I hesitate to draw attention to San Pancho. While some ex-pats blend right in, there are the gauche, like the gringo who had a private 9 hole golf course built for his own very occasional use. The economic slowdown has derailed a number of planned developments. In one case there is a wrought iron gate supported by impressive stone arches. Alas it is not protecting anything, but one day it will be very exclusive.

The local Mexican community seems to take the boom and bust in stride. The only bridge into town was washed out in the last rains. Fortunately the river is dry

SO HAPPY TOGETHER



JoAnne, Tom, Erin, Ben, Linda, and Julian

Photo by Joanne Cook

now and cars (but not trucks) can make it through the gully. It seems that the twenty founding families have intermarried and make up most of the one thousand residents. The next generation simply finds an unoccupied portion of family land and without benefit of building codes or inspection, builds a small home.

The pace is slow. Everybody knows everybody. The pool man's sister is a nurse. She can send her husband, who works at the restaurant you ate at last night, on an errand to get you the medicine you need. The tailor is married to the house keeper whose brother is a mechanic who can fix the flat tire you got attempting to navigate the cobblestone road. The informal network of goods and services puts Craig's List to shame.

It was Erin's parents, Linda and Julian, who first introduced the kids to the village of San Pancho. Linda, JoAnne and I were at the same university together (although we did not know each other then) and Julian's New Jersey high school was a rival of mine. It took our children falling in love to bring us together. Their gen-

erosity made so much of the wedding possible, and they are a rollicking good time.

We were able to invite Jay and Cheryl, our oldest and closest Minnesota friends, who have known Ben all his life. Whether the four of us were sitting poolside overlooking the ocean, shopping at a local market, bumping over the rutted streets, or watching the dance moves of the younger wedding guests, our eyes would meet, and the unstated message would be, "I cannot believe we are here. I sure didn't see this coming when we met 33 years ago."

At this point I might get mawkishly sentimental and metaphoric about the bumps on the road of life, but I am still too happy looking at wedding photos and awaiting the honeymooners' return.

Tom H. Cook is just a dad. Ben is a Barton and South High grad, and his wife Erin (that's the first time I have written that) loves Minneapolis; wise woman.

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