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Intruders at Arlington High foiled by security protocol

By JAN WILLMS

It was easy to pick out the intruders at Arlington High School on a Wednesday afternoon in November.

"The educational aides and Assistant Principal Kevin Wolff were doing their job," said Jake Bobrowski, school resource officer at Arlington. "They were monitoring the hallways, and there were no other students walking in the halls."

Bobrowski said a custodian first noticed a group of six males coming through the loading dock door and radioed in their presence. Wolff jumped on the computer, checked the cameras and observed the young men, none of whom were currently students at Arlington.

"The assistant superintendent recognized two as former students, and I remembered one as well that raised some flags," Bobrowski said.

A recent trial involving the case of Jerome Cross, an 18-year-old who pleaded guilty in the shooting death of Earl Ray Freeman, 16, caused the school concern. Freeman was shot on a Metro Transit bus in April, and fights had broken out repeatedly since Cross was charged with murder. Wolff determined the school should go into lockdown mode. Doors were locked and lights turned off.

"I called area squads and let them know something was going on," Bobrowski said. "Within minutes of this, another officer and I had located two of the young men."

Two others were located near the school by plainclothes officers, and later that day the remaining two were identified and located. All six were arrested, three as juveniles and three as adults. They were charged with felony trespass, according to Bobrowski.

"Everything went as planned, and everyone did a good job," Bobrowski said. "There was no panic."

Bobrowski is one of 12 school resource officers in the schools of Saint Paul, according to Paul Iovino, commander of the Saint Paul Police Juvenile Unit. Each high school has an officer, and the remainder cover the mid-



Arlington High School's Jake Bobrowski is one of 12 school resource officers in Saint Paul schools, according to Paul Iovino, commander the Saint Paul Police Juvenile Unit. Each high school has an officer, and the remainder cover the middle schools. (Photo by Terry Faust)

dle schools.

"They don't report to roll call," Iovino said. "They respond to the school." He said arrival, lunch and dismissal times are the periods requiring the most attention.

"I think (the high school shootings at) Columbine forced the police and schools to take a much closer look at security," Iovino said. "We are currently doing a safety assessment in cooperation with the Saint Paul schools to determine how safe the schools are."

Iovino said a survey of school staff and faculty, students, police officers and neighbors has been distributed. Results of the survey are expected by the end of December.

"The survey will show the perception of how people feel," Iovino said, adding that perception of safety is sometimes as important as the reality.

He said results of the survey will be presented to the school board, as well as to the police department administration. Iovino said the data could determine how funding and equipment might be used or allocated for.

Iovino said terrorist threats are taken very seriously, and students making them can be detained in juvenile detention centers.

"We go through the protocol and try to determine if some ill intent is attached to a threat," Iovino said.

He said each threat is handled individually.

"A child may tell a friend or an administrator that he wants to blow the school up. Or he might say he would like to blow the school up with a hand grenade. Or he may say he wants to take an AK47 to school and shoot Mr. Johnson," Iovino said. "The more specific a child is about the time and date of an event, or the means to carry out a threat, the more credible the threat is."

Iovino said the police department has entered into department-wide, active training. Much of it is based on dealing with terrorist threats or hit lists in schools.

Iovino said the police department really values its relationship with the schools.

"Our working relationship with the schools is something we're really proud of," he said. "I think the success in the Arlington incident is because of that relationship."

Will Waterkamp, safety and security administrator for Saint Paul schools, also values that relationship. He said that although each school develops a safety plan

that is site specific, the school district is fairly strict with lockdown procedures and does not offer a lot of leeway.

"Each school's plan is based on the district plan, which adopts state guidelines," he said. "It's a cascading type of process."

Waterkamp said that Saint Paul schools use plain speak.

"We don't approve of using code words," he said. "We find our model cuts down on confusion."

Waterkamp said that although security and safety plans were in place in schools long before Columbine, that incident had a huge effect on changing some of the protocol.

"One of the things that is very important to us is that we do this without panicking the kids and making security burdensome," Waterkamp added.

He said that most of the individuals working with school safety either have or have had children in school, and they want the schools to offer a learning environment, not a prison environment.

Waterkamp said some administrators might give different answers about what is considered serious in security breaches.

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monitor

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Monitor in a Minute

Dara Thai sees license conditions added

The owners of a Minnehaha Mall restaurant must follow a dozen license conditions, the St. Paul City Council decided November 21. The council set the conditions for Dara Thai Restaurant, after a neighborhood meeting and review by city licensing staff.

The restaurant's new ownership, Song Thao and Chi Yang Shong, wants to add wine and malt liquor on-sale service, liquor on sale-2 a.m. closing and an entertainment license. But several neighborhood residents filed letters of objections, forcing a legislative hearing in October. The City Council ultimately rejected the request to allow the restaurant to stay open until 2 a.m., requiring a midnight closing instead. This condition can be reviewed in six months and if there are no problems, the restaurant can seek the extended hours at a later date.

But the city has placed restrictions on the other licenses, requiring that wine and beer only be served with food, and that the restaurant keep receipts to provide such sales. Any building remodeling must get city approval prior to its start and a soundproof wall must be added on the Chatsworth side of the building to muffle noise. Video surveillance cameras must be installed. Trash must be picked up daily. There will also be restrictions on patron loitering behind the building and other measures taken to mitigate noise.

At the October hearing, city licensing staff indicated concerns with the operation of the business, especially with what appears to be the intent to operate a nightclub with wine and beer licenses. The city requires that with license like those sought by

Dara Thai, wine and beer can only be sold with food. But in this case it would have meant keeping the kitchen open until 2 a.m., something that hasn't been done successfully at other St. Paul establishments. In fact, the city has had problems with other restaurants that have tried to improperly operate as nightclubs. After Dara Thai applied for its licenses, the City Council passed a new ordinance that prohibits other businesses from seeking similar licenses. But because Dara Thai's application predates that ordinance, it is not affected by the new regulations.

Dara Thai's new owners say they deserve a chance to run a good business and that they should not be judged by the actions of past business owners and the behavior caused by other Minnehaha Mall patrons.

District Seven (Thomas-Dale) Planning Council held a neighborhood meeting this fall and suggested conditions be placed on the licenses. But a petition against the licenses was also submitted by 94 neighborhood residents, who are concerned about crime, disruptive behavior, noise and litter they believe is linked to Minnehaha Mall business patrons. Neighbors have expressed concern about late-night entertainment. Four neighbors attended the legislative hearing to speak in opposition to the licenses.

Proposal to ban rooftop signs awaits hearing

A proposal to ban new rooftop signs will have to wait for a time for its public hearing. Two proposed ordinances governing rooftop signs were set for a public hearing November 21. But that hearing was postponed until December 19 to allow more time for review of the proposed regulations.

The ordinance was intro-

duced in October by Ward Four Council Member Jay Benanav. Benanav, who leaves office at the end of the year, has worked on numerous sign regulation proposals during his decade on the City Council.

Rooftop signs are signs on top of a building, used to advertise a business or services in that building. They are not regulated in the same way as billboards.

Efforts to regulate rooftop signs in St. Paul began several years ago, at about the same time city officials began studying regulations for billboards. The most recent request for rooftop sign regulations was brought several months ago, then sent to the Planning Commission for more study.

Anti-sign activists have long complained that rooftop signs are unattractive. Property owners contend that the signs can be designed in an attractive manner and are needed to promote their businesses. In some cases, rooftop signs can be considered part of the historic detail of a building.

Because the study isn't complete the City Council has two ordinances before it. One is for an outright ban on new rooftop signs. The other ordinance would allow signs with conditions on placement on roofs, sign size and how signs are mounted on a rooftop.

Existing signs could remain in place. The regulations would only apply to new signs. For example, a new sign could only be 2-1/2 feet above the roof line of a one-story building or five feet above the roof line of a two or three story building.

Council studies two-lane parkway option for Ayd Mill Road

The studies of the two-lane parkway option for Ayd Mill Road should proceed as the city in-

tended seven years ago, the St. Paul City Council unanimously decided October 24. But plenty of questions remain about the project, including how to reconvene a citizen task force that hasn't met since 2000.

The task force would reconvene, then Public Works staff would complete an environmental impact statement or EIS on Ayd Mill Road supporting a two-lane parkway option. The parkway would connect directly to I-35E on its south end and indirectly, via frontage road, to I-94 to the north.

But the city currently has no funds allocated to reconvene the task force. There is no funding in the 2007 budget, nor is it a line item for 2008. That could require a budget amendment.

Nor is it clear which city department would lead the reconvened task force. The Planning Commission had a co-chair, along with a neighborhood co-chair. Staff responsibility was shared by Planning and Economic Development and Public Works.

Another question mark is representation. At least four of the members of the task force that adjourned in 2000 have moved away from the area or left the organizations they represented at that time.

Controversy over Ayd Mill Road and whether it should be connected to the freeway system has roiled area neighborhoods for decades. In 2000 the City Council recommended Ayd Mill Road be rebuilt as a two-lane parkway. But a few years later, Mayor Randy Kelly nixed that recommendation and ordered that the EIS be finished to support the reconstruction of Ayd Mill Road as a four-lane roadway. His administration connected Ayd Mill Road at its south end and set up directional signage at the north end to help motorists connect with I-94.

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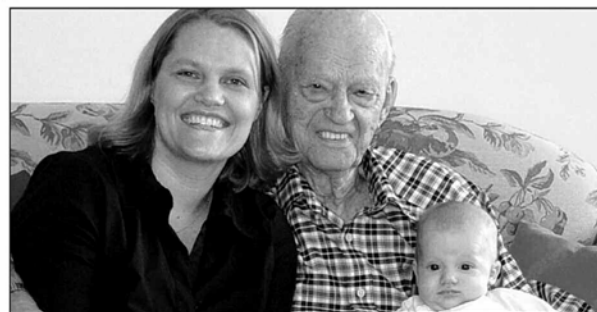
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Arlington intruders foiled

Continued from page 1

"We look at the evidence as a whole," he said. "What is the motivation? What is the total circumstance? A zero tolerance policy does not work well with any district; it comes back to bite you."

He said it is sometimes difficult to determine what is a serious threat. He said, however that the student handbook has been updated, giving students and parents a clear idea of what is acceptable and what is not.

"We've spent a lot of training dollars on protocol," Waterkamp said. He said the school has worked on a program that offers a way of looking at any threat made and determining its proper context.

"It helps us determine whether to notify law enforcement or the school board," he said.

Waterkamp said a level one offense may be a spontaneous utterance. A level two offense would reflect behaviors not accepted at school, and parents would be contacted. A level three behavior would cause the school to contact the police.

"We're doing public forums after the first of the year," Waterkamp said. "We will talk to the public about training we have done and get some feedback. As parents, they can help us be knowledgeable."

According to Bobrowski, the school resource officer at Arlington, the school is mandated to drill several times a year on the procedure to follow during a lockdown.

"Just like everything, we learn through other incidents what we need to change," he said. For example, even though all went as it should during the recent lockdown event at Arlington, the school has made some changes on the loading dock door. It is now kept locked all the time, and delivery people go through a different process in unloading supplies.

Bobrowski stressed the importance of the school resource officer program.

"We become so familiar with the kids," he said. He mentioned a situation in which one of the students talked to him recently about something that was going on in the neighborhood.

"We are here to help when the community has a problem," Bobrowski said. "It may be a small thing, but we can prevent it from turning into something bigger."

He said the SRO program has evolved over many years.

"When I was a kid, there was an Officer Friendly in the schools," he said. "Then there was the DARE program, and now the school resource officer. It's a good partnership between the police department and the schools."

"One good thing came out of the Arlington incident," Bobrowski said. "We were not surprised, but we were happy the real situation went so well."

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Community continues contentious debate on Rock-Tenn power source

By JANE MCCLURE

Be it wood, switchgrass, natural gas or garbage, the fuel chosen as a source of power for Midway's Rock-Tenn plant will generate emissions. How those emissions could affect public health drives the increasingly contentious debate over Rock-Tenn's future and the fate of 500 jobs.

Heightened public awareness over the emissions issue drew more than 200 people to a Neighbors Against the Burner (NAB) presentation November 14. The activists' group is lobbying against the use of processed garbage or refuse-derived fuel (RDF) at the plant, and is instead pushing for Rock-Tenn to burn natural gas.

"Neighbors Against the Burner (NAB) will outlaw incineration in our state," said NAB co-founder Nancy Hone.

This fall the Rock-Tenn Community Advisory Panel (RCAP) has been debating emissions data from various sources. RCAP, which is made up of representatives of district councils, neighborhood associations, business groups and unions, must weigh in next year about fuel choices for a new power plant. Rock-Tenn lost its longtime source of steam power this summer when Xcel Energy began decommissioning its old coal-burning High Bridge plant.

On an interim basis, fuel oil is being burned to generate steam to recycle paper. But Rock-Tenn officials contend that costs mean that fuel oil and natural gas aren't viable long-term options for the paper recycler, so another power source must be

sought.

NAB contends that Rock-Tenn should look at installing a natural gas burner, saying it would be less polluting. This would cost about \$11.2 million, according to a Green Institute study released earlier this year. But that figure doesn't include ongoing fuel and maintenance costs.

Other issues also factor into the debate over emissions. How large a new power plant should be is an issue RCAP will discuss in the weeks ahead. Related to that is the question of whether a larger and potentially less polluting power plant could fuel other Midway area industries besides Rock-Tenn. Rock-Tenn's own energy use is also drawing scrutiny as RCAP is seeking more data on how the paper recycler could reduce its energy use through conservation measures. The task force has asked for emissions data from all of the power plants that burn RDF produced at Newport. The Newport plant processes Ramsey and Washington counties' garbage into fuel that is burned at Xcel Energy power plants.

The ongoing controversy centers on the possibility of burning RDF.

Representatives of Rock-Tenn, St. Paul Port Authority and District Energy and its subsidiary, Market Street Energy, emphasize that they are looking at an array of options for Rock-Tenn and would prefer not to use RDF.

But under Minnesota law, RDF is considered to be biomass. A burner licensed for biomass



The fuel chosen as a source of power for Midway's Rock-Tenn plant will generate emissions. How those emissions could affect public health drives the increasingly contentious debate over Rock-Tenn's future and the fate of 500 jobs.

can burn up to 30 percent RDF if that is allowed in its Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) permit.

Instead of burning garbage as fuel, communities should strive for "zero waste" through stepped-up recycling and reuse programs, said Dr. Paul Connett, professor emeritus of chemistry at St. Lawrence University. He spoke before RCAP November 12 and to the NAB gathering November 14.

"It amazes me that this is all about saving 500 jobs," said Connett. He claims that having a zero waste strategy actually creates jobs through recycling, composting and deconstruction of a wide variety of goods.

Connett calls RDF "the worst possible fuel," saying that everything that goes into garbage can be shredded and burned. He warns against the health risks of burning RDF, saying it can generate a variety of pollutants including dioxin, mercury and carbon dioxide. Burning also generates tiny nanoparticles, which can carry pollutants into the lungs.

NAB members also are raising red flags about burning garbage. They dispute information on how garbage is screened for metals and toxins before it is shredded 1 to fuel. "RDF is not chemically different from garbage," said NAB Member John Curry. "It is in the garbage you throw away." He noted that

recent recalls of toys containing lead mean that many of those toys landed in household garbage and possibly in RDF.

Another environmental problem with incineration is ash disposal, said Connett. Every three to four tons of garbage burned generated about one ton of ash. That ash is used in some places as landfill cover or even mixed with other materials to manufacture pavement.

But others caution that determining the level of emissions from any future power plant is complex and requires detailed studies and computer modeling. Dr. Gregory Pratt is on the faculty of University of Minnesota School of Public Health and also works for the MPCA. He spoke to RCAP in October. Pratt emphasized that he spoke to RCAP as someone with expertise on emissions and not specifically as a representative of the State or the University.

Not only do specifics of incineration technology and pollution cleanup equipment have to be considered, said Pratt, so too does the amount and type of fuel or fuels burned. Data from other air pollution sources also must be factored in. Even the mode of transport for a fuel and the pollution that generates has to be weighed.

Emissions are generated by all fuels and vary by type of fuel, said Pratt. They are regulated by

state and federal statutes. The federal Clean Air Act, for example, lists 188 toxins that can be found in the atmosphere.

Emissions from incineration are only a part of the overall air pollution picture, said Pratt. Emissions from motor vehicles, home heating sources, agriculture and other sources have to be considered. Yet another factor is how far pollutants can travel. Tests have shown some pollutants traveling from Texas to Minnesota.

Pratt provided RCAP with detailed information on emissions sources, air modeling and pollutants, which has been posted at www.rtadvisory.org

Pratt said emissions controls cannot remove all of the dioxin generated from an incinerator. "But you can do a pretty good job of it," he said.

But Connett disputes the safety of emissions control equipment. "You may have reduced emissions but there is no accountability," he said.

One question that RCAP will consider in the weeks ahead is the pollutants that could be generated by burning biomass sources, such as wood waste, corn stover or switchgrass. Those fuel sources and their emissions are currently being studied by the MPCA, said Pratt. But Connett cautions about any kind of burning, saying that biomass also creates polluting emissions.

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Residents lobby for more Central Corridor station stops

By JANE MCCLURE

If residents of neighborhoods around University Avenue face bus service cutbacks when Central Corridor light rail begins operations, they in turn deserve more rail station locations. That's the message a coalition of community groups will take to a Metropolitan Council advisory committee December 20.

Almost 100 people attended a November 29 meeting at Lao Family Community to push for added stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western avenues. Current plans calls for stations to be placed at one-mile intervals, at Snelling Avenue, Lexington Parkway, Dale Street and Rice Street. Adding the three locations would cut the distance to one-half mile between stations.

"There's a compelling case for additional stations," said Steve Wilson, president of the Summit-University Planning Council (SUPC). SUPC is a member of the District Councils Collaborative, one of many groups pushing for the added stations. "It is something the community should have and is entitled to."

The NAACP, Community Stabilization Project, St. Paul Urban League, Model Cities, University UNITED, Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, and have joined SUPC and the district councils' group in pushing for the three added stations. The sponsoring groups are hurrying to meet a December 12 deadline to get their comments submitted and compiled for the upcoming Central Corridor Citizens Advisory Committee meeting. Supporters intend to pack that meeting to make their case.

The rail station sites were set in an environmental impact statement (EIS) completed last year. Parts of the EIS including the cur-

rent station locations along University Avenue date back to the earliest light rail planning of the 1980s and 1990s. Metropolitan Council is currently conducting a supplemental EIS to look at adding one or more of the three additional stations proposed, according to Shoua Lee and Nkongo Cigolo, two of the Metropolitan

locations.

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, City Council members, Ramsey County commissioners, state legislators and Congresswoman Betty McCollum are joining in the call for more station sites. Ken Iosso, legislative aide to Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority Chairman Rafael Ortega,

neighborhoods around the proposed light rail line need to see benefits, if their communities are to be disrupted by construction and train operations. "If we cannot have these additional stops, then we should not have light rail running through this community," he said. Khaliq and others recalled the destruction of area neighbor-

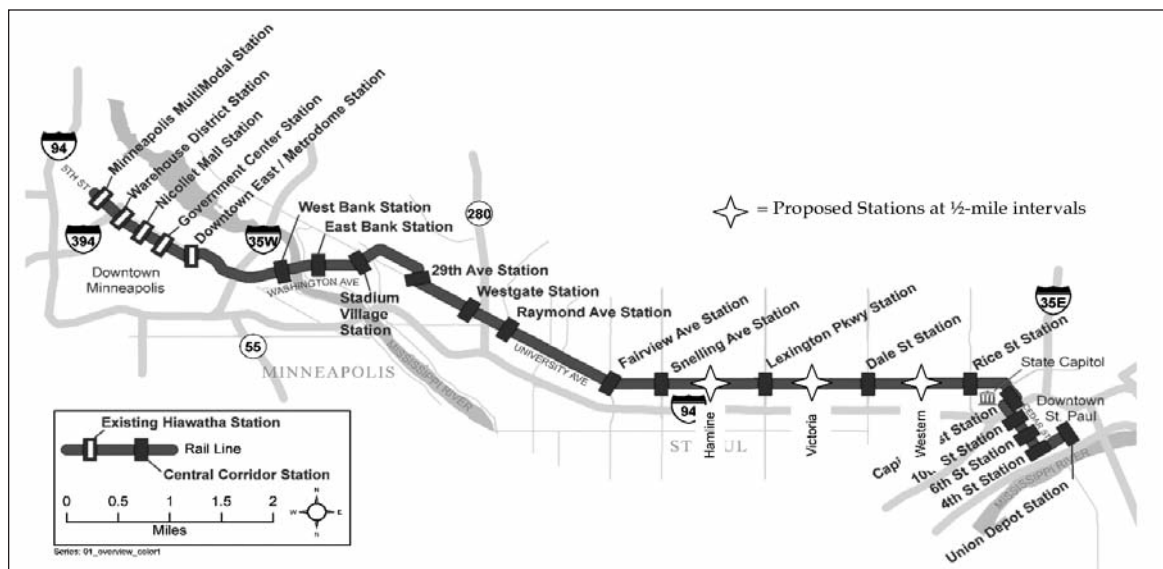
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Council's outreach coordinators.

The findings are to be presented at 5 p.m. Thursday, December 20 at Goodwill/Easter Seals, 553 Fairview Av. to the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee.

Groups lobbying for the added stations are distributing comment cards and seeking comments via e-mail by December 12. Comments can be sent to carol@dcc-stpaul-mpls.org

The comments will be added to a District Councils Collaborative research report presented November 29. That report lays out a number of reasons to add one or all of the stations, citing factors ranging from transportation equity to increased potential for redevelopment around the three sta-

said the county is urging Metropolitan Council to at least install the infrastructure for stations, even if the stations cannot be added later.

Incoming Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III is a Route 16 rider. He said it doesn't make sense to spend almost \$1 billion on a transit project yet not improve transit service for area residents.

Russ Stark, who will represent Ward Four starting in January 2008, said other parts of the Central Corridor line have stations closer than one mile. He suggested Metropolitan Council look at reducing the number of stations in the downtown areas to add neighborhood stations.

Nathaniel Khaliq of the NAACP and others said that

hoods when Interstate 94 was built, saying it isn't right that the neighborhoods would again be disrupted by a major transportation project.

Having stations every half-mile instead of every mile would be more consistent with station spacing in other rail projects in urban neighborhoods, said researcher Mary Kay Bailey. She prepared the report for the District Councils Collaborative. Adding stations would better serve the large number of local trips along the corridor and provide transportation service equities.

One argument made for building Central Corridor is the high transit ridership along University Avenue, said Bailey. But many of those trips on the existing bus service are local. In fact, the

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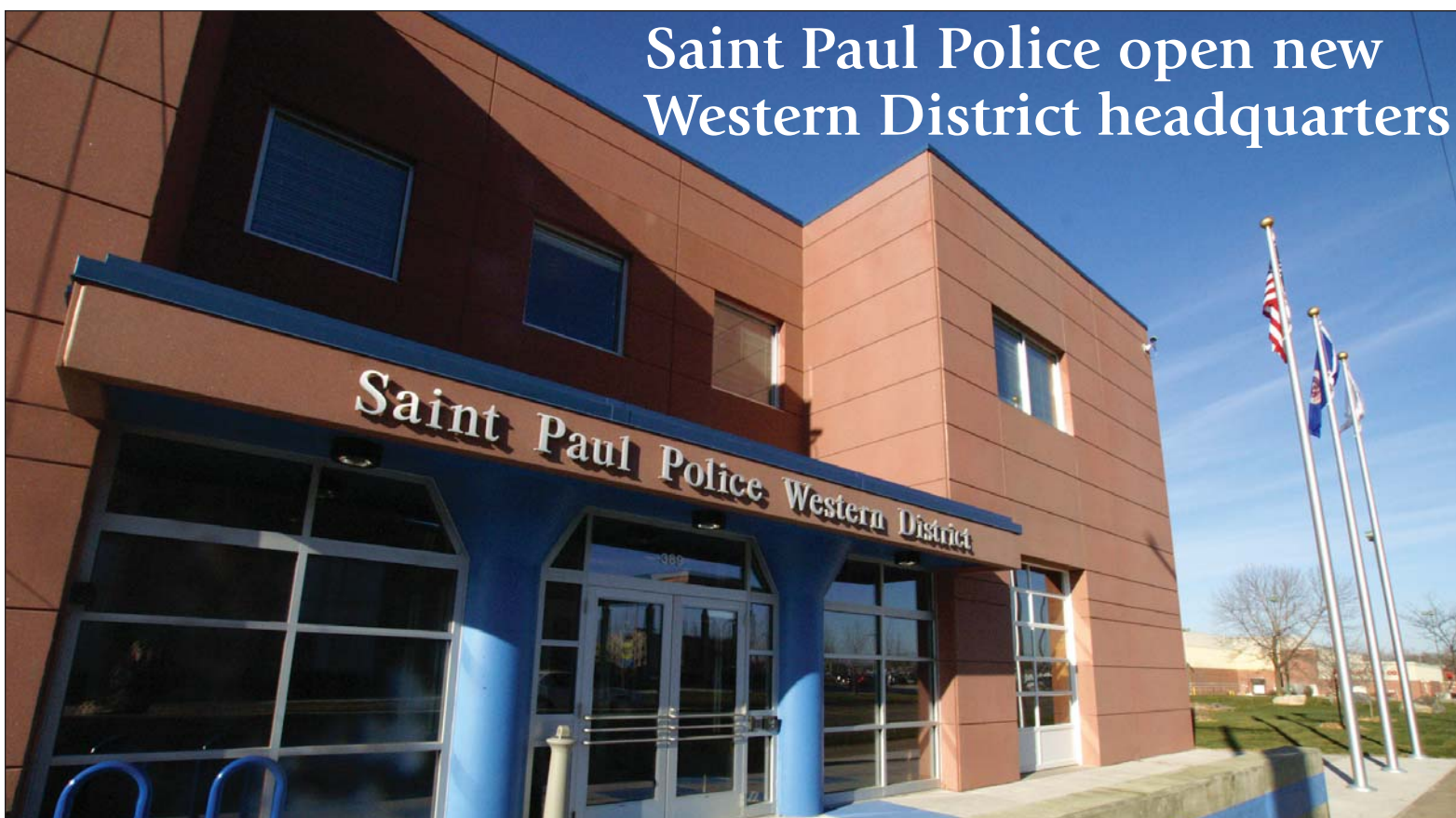
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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

Saint Paul Police open new Western District headquarters



A community open house at the new Saint Paul Police Western District headquarters is scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. Dec. 11, with a program starting at 3 p.m.

By JAN WILLMS

It's the first new building the Saint Paul Police Department has ever had.

The state-of-the-art Western District office opened its doors

Nov. 19 at 389 Hamline Avenue. The new location is between I-94 and University Avenue, and was the former site of Chevy's Fresh Mex restaurant.

According to Commander

Colleen Luna, the building is also built for growth and expansion.

"We're more centrally located," she said. "We're in the area of the Central Corridor light rail, and where the cameras are locat-

ed." The cameras are a new development, set up along street lights to capture lawbreakers on film.

The two-story building is consistent with Mayor Chris Coleman's commitment to high-

density development and design on the Central Corridor.

"The Western District North and South offices are combined in this building," added Commander Doug Holtz. He said the city might have other plans for the old locations.

"There is a patrol, investigative and community room," he said. "Also, crime prevention is housed here."

Approximately 100 officers would work out of the building, which serves the western third of the city.

Holtz said it was exciting, because it is a police station that is built as a police station, not a re-converted space that has been the usual case over the years.

Luna said the new building is environmentally friendly, as well.

"The lights go on and off automatically, saving energy," she said. "Environmentally friendly products are used, and the heat and air are upgraded to be considered energy efficient."

Luna said the first floor of the building is community friendly.

"There are historical photos, and an old black Maria in the lobby," she said. She said the building is a welcoming place for community members.

A community open house is scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. Dec. 11, with a program starting at 3 p.m.

Midway in a minute

Continued from page 2

Kelly also had Ayd Mill Road resurfaced and some of its connections with city streets rebuilt or blocked.

Ward Four Council Member Jay Benanav had asked that no additional funds or work be done on Ayd Mill Road until a final new EIS is done. But he amended that recommendation to allow for a proposed project to rebuild the connection to I-35E. That is a 2008-2009 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee recommendation granting \$150,000 to repair the ramps connecting I-35E to Ayd Mill Road's

south end. The City Council is now expected to approve that with the total capital budget in December.

The council action also does not rule out reconstruction of the St. Clair-Ayd Mill Road connection, something sought by Wilder Park residents. The on and off-ramps are very close to some of their homes and they have lobbies to move the ramps north of St. Clair. Otherwise, the council limits any money spent on Ayd Mill Road to necessary repairs and maintenance.

Dog park quest is on

The quest for a new off-leash dog park or parks is off and running again, as the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission unani-

mously voted October 30 to establish a citywide task force to study future park sites. Parks and Recreation will seek applications for task force members this month, with the intent of appointing the task force in December.

The task force would be asked to work with district councils, dog owners and other community members to make recommendations on new off-leash dog park sites. Those recommendations will be brought back to the Parks and Recreation Commission in spring 2008.

Any off-leash dog park has to have final approval from the St. Paul City Council.

Parks and Recreation Director Bob Bierscheid said the task force will have 10 to 12 members. Eight people from around the city at-

tended the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and expressed interest in the task force reaching out to other groups.

Gerry Livesay, a Payne-Phalen resident, said the Parks Commission needs to appoint a group that will work with district councils in neighborhoods where new parks could be located. Livesay lives near Parks and Recreation's own off-leash park, at Arlington-Arkwright. Neighbors and dog owners there have sparred with the city over the locking of a gate, which they say had made park use more inconvenient.

Commissioners said it's important that the task force represent dog owners as well as those who may have concerns about off-leash dog parks. "We shouldn't have a group that's all 'pro' or

all 'anti'," said Commissioner Tom Byrne.

Arlington-Arkwright is the only city-owned park, although dogs can also run off-leash in Ramsey County's Battle Creek Park. An attempt earlier this year by Parks and Recreation allow dogs to run off-leash on recreation field space at Groveland, Edgumbe and St. Clair was curbed by Macalester-Groveland Community Council. The council has decided to set up its own group to look for potential off-leash dog park areas in the southwest part of the city. This council has asked for representation from several area district councils, including councils in the Midway area.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Station by station Central Corridor planning underway

By JANE MCCLURE

Station by station, intersection by intersection, planning for Central Corridor is underway. Workshops for seven of the University Avenue station areas got underway in mid-November and continued through the first week of December. Their ideas took shape on maps, charts and three-dimensional models, and will become part of small area plans that will be drafted over the next several weeks.

The next phase of Central Corridor station area planning is underway, with workshops to suggest future land uses seven station areas. The sessions began November 19 and continue through the first week of December.

The workshops have two components, said City Planner Donna Drummond. Invited participants spent a day making suggestions for station areas. Three-D models of streets and buildings will be used, along with graphics. The workshop participants went through comments from a series of October roundtables on the seven station areas, and reviewed the Central Corridor Development Strategy, a planning document the St. Paul City Council approved earlier this fall.

Participants discussed issues including land use, development, station locations, public realm or space and circulation of vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles. Those invited to the day-long workshops include property and business owners, residents, and representatives of district councils, neighborhood associations, community development corporations and social service groups. Design professionals, Metropolitan Council staff and staff from St. Paul Planning and Economic Development (PED), Parks and Recreation and Public Works worked with volunteers. Then the general public was invited in each evening to review the work and

make further comments, which will also become part of the station area plans.

The sessions began November 19 with the Lexington Parkway station and continued November 20 with Snelling Avenue, Dale Street, Rice Street, Westgate, Raymond and Fairview. City staff and Planning Commission representatives were pleased with the turnout at each session.

mend approval of the station area plans, sending them to the St. Paul Planning Commission and City Council for public hearings.

Once the City Council adopts the station area plans, those plans become part of the city's comprehensive plan. They

town area. There will also be studies of stations at Hamline, Western and Victoria, if those intersections are chosen by the Metropolitan Council as station sites. The District Councils Collaborative, a coalition of neighborhood groups along University, held a community workshop on the three station areas November 29, after deadline for this issue of the Monitor.

"I think these plans can serve a variety of purposes," said Drummond.

The plans will also contain ideas that various community groups along Central Corridor can take on as their own. These could include such ideas as creating a park, developing housing or planning public improvements such as bicycle and pedestrian trails.

City planning staff is also meeting with a variety of other groups to discuss station area planning, Drummond said. For example, city staff recently met with the non-profit group Historic St. Paul to hear its questions and concerns about station area planning. Historic St. Paul is a non-profit entity dedicated to historic preservation. One of the station areas, Raymond, is in the university-Raymond Historic District. But other station areas also include buildings deemed to be of historic merit.

Members of the Central Corridor Station Area Planning

Steering Committee reviewed the planning process November 13. The group also reviewed the October roundtable results and shared their impressions of the public comments heard.

Committee Chairperson and St. Paul Planning Commission member George Johnson said the wide range of comments on each station area show the range of ideas as well as some paradoxical thinking. "There's a hunger for change and yet a fear of change at the same time," he said.

Others said they didn't realize how contentious potential redevelopment and station siting issues could be, especially at Snelling where three different sites for the station are being eyed.

"It's interesting to hear so many different perspectives and hear what's important to people" said Sheila Sahu, District 13 Community Council representative on the steering committee.

David Stokes, steering committee representative for the Midway and St. Paul Chambers of Commerce, said he was surprised at the level of debate the Snelling station siting generated. Three sites between Pascal and Snelling are being considered for that station. "I didn't realize how huge an issue that is," he said.

Several steering committee members said any station area planning needs to be sensitive to the concerns about park and ride commuters, which were raised at every station area session. Jack McCann, a commercial property owner at Raymond and University, said his property will lose turn lanes and several on-street spaces. The plus for the business and property owners in that area is that Central Corridor may jump-start the long-standing discussion of a shared commercial parking lot there.



Urban Strategies, the city's planning consultant on the Central Corridor project, will be present to help prepare the plans. After the workshops Urban Strategies will prepare a land use plan for each station area. Each plan will be about 10-12 pages long. The plans will be brought back to the steering committee in late January. Then the public will be allowed to weigh in on the draft plans.

Sometime in early 2008 the steering committee will recom-

then be used to make any zoning changes and guide an array of decisions ranging from capital improvements to city investment in private development.

The seven station areas currently under study are just some of the stations along the 11-mile Central Corridor route. Next year station area planning will begin for stations in the down-

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Housing/retail mix combine for Invest Saint Paul...

Hardy souls brave temps, break ground for Winnipeg Project

By JAN WILLMS

Around 50 hardy souls braved low-digit temperatures Nov. 27 as ground was broken on the Winnipeg Community project, a development that will combine housing and retail in an environmentally friendly atmosphere at the intersection of Winnipeg and Rice in Saint Paul.

An idea that first started forming nearly 10 years ago, the project took off in earnest

around 2004 and 2005, according to Jonathan Sage-Martinson of Sparc Development. Sparc and Legacy Management and Development Corporation are co-developers of the Winnipeg.

Mayor Chris Coleman, addressing the crowd of city and neighborhood dignitaries in attendance, said he could understand the frustration that sometimes comes with the long wait in getting projects off the



Around 50 hardy souls braved low-digit temperatures Nov. 27 as ground was broken on the Winnipeg Community project, a development that will combine housing and retail at the intersection of Winnipeg and Rice. (Photo by Terry Faust)



The Winnipeg development will have just under 6,000 square feet of commercial space on the first floor. Fifty-six units of housing above that space will serve a variety of incomes.

ground. But he compared the Winnipeg to another site that took even longer.

"I was recently in Germany at the Cologne Cathedral," Coleman said. "That was started in 1240 and completed in 1870." Coleman said the project reinforces the fact that the Rice Street area is a community where everyone matters.

The Winnipeg is a key project of the mayor's Invest Saint Paul initiative and part of a broad re-investment strategy in the North End.

Invest Saint Paul is an initiative to bring city services and members of the community together to address specific challenges facing neighborhoods.

Lee Helgen, a member of the City Council, called the Winnipeg a signature project that he hopes will move the entire North Side forward.

Commissioner Janice Rettman added her approval.

"We have to make sure those people who work hard for a living have good housing, and that's what this is all about," she

said. "The bottom line is we all have to work to make sure our neighborhoods are vibrant. We don't want to forget the past, even though we live in the present and prepare for the future."

Jennifer Cassidy, the president of Saint Bernard's school, said the beginning of any of these projects is a dream.

"We believe the Winnipeg will be a great addition to our neighborhood, and we are excited to see it become a reality," she said.

The Winnipeg development will have just under 6,000 square feet of commercial space on the first floor, according to Sage-Martinson. Fifty-six units of housing above that space will serve a variety of incomes. He said apartments would range from \$400 to \$1100 for one to three bedroom units.

Sage-Martinson said six units are set aside for people earning 50 per cent of the median income, and six units are taking part in the governor's plan to end long-term homelessness. Those units will house individu-

als who have experienced homelessness in the past and qualify for YMCA service projects.

"It's the first green affordable housing project in the city of Saint Paul," Sage-Martinson said. He said the project offers 20 green features. Some of those include an unabridged storm water retention system, low volatile organic compounds paints, and heating and cooling with heat pumps. There will be ceiling fans in all units, energy star appliances that are certified for efficiency, and linoleum. Sage-Martinson said the appliances and heat pumps will help lower tenants' utility bills. The linoleum is renewable and biodegradable.

"A green roof is still being considered," he said. Sage-Martinson said the development fits into the neighborhood, offering choices that did not exist before. And although it fits modern businesses, the Winnipeg will feature a 1920s look, mimicking small individual store fronts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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Election to Ward 4 seat continues Stark's work on University Avenue

By JAN WILLMS

With his immersion in issues of development and transportation along University Avenue during his eight and a half years with University UNITED, running for City Council seemed like a logical next step for Russ Stark.

The newly elected Ward 4 council member credits his experience with the issues and the people he has come to know as a driving force in his decision to seek office.

University UNITED is a non-profit coalition of residents and businesses that promotes transportation-oriented development along University Avenue. The past three years Stark has directed Midway Transportation Management Organization (TMO). The TMO works to improve opportunities and policies for increasing use of transit, biking and walking in Saint Paul.

Stark said that emphasizing connected communities has been a part of his campaign from early on, and he considers it important for people to be connected with their neighbors.

"University Avenue and Snelling have at times been dividing points, but they make more of a community connection," he said.

Stark said University Avenue is the biggest example, but there are other streets as well that can maximize the benefits of city living.

"A lot of folks live here because they like diversity and being able to walk places," Stark said.

Stark said that a lot of his background lay in environmental advocacy, and he hopes as a Council member to raise the bar for energy efficiency and innovations. He said he sees this as an opportunity citywide for projects that get some form of city subsidy.

"The Twin Cities have lots of catch-up to do in the area of mass transit," Stark said.

Although he considers the Metro a leader in bike trails, he considers cities of similar size much further along in light rail or other forms of mass transit.

"Every year we wait gets more expensive," he said.

Stark indicated that transportation can make a real impact on global warming issues. He sees the Central Corridor as one piece of a future system.



The newly elected Ward 4 council member Russ Stark credits his experience with the issues and the people he has come to know as a driving force in his decision to seek office. (Photo by Terry Faust)

"Its usefulness is considerably greater if it connects with rail and bus lines that can help people get where they want to go," he said.

Another city-wide issue that concerns Stark is the future of the Rock-Tenn paper recycling plant at I-94 and Cretin Avenue. He said the plant has enormous energy needs, and he questions what the public role should be in trying to develop an energy source for the company.

Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) is not a good fuel system, according to Stark. "It's expensive, doesn't burn very effectively and creates disincentives for us to be recycling," he said. He said he hopes there are other solutions that can work.

"We as a city have a responsibility to make sure that whatever we do we can live with for a long time," he said.

More locally, Stark is interested in good relations between the community and the St. Thomas campus. He said that how student rental housing is handled is important. Another area he wants to look at is sober housing.

He said he expects the new

Council will pass some sort of ordinance to regulate and monitor sober housing.

"Sober housing is a good idea, but there is a potential for abuse," he said.

Stark said that one of the things he really wants to do is set up more regular e-mail connections with his ward.

"People can subscribe to it, get information from the council, and get information flowing both ways," he said. "It gives people an opportunity to respond and give feedback. To my knowledge, that hasn't happened yet in St. Paul."

Stark indicated that one of the issues he hopes to work on is the development process in general. His background has given him the opportunity to listen to developers, and they are often unclear as to what the goals and expectations of the city are.

"A set of guidelines is important, showing developers where we as a city want to go," he said.

He also talked about reaching out to minority businesses in the community.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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On the Wednesday evenings of Dec 12 and 19 families and friends are invited to enjoy a soup supper starting at 5:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall of Jehovah Lutheran Church, corner of Snelling and Thomas. Informal worship and activities to prepare for Christmas follow the supper fellowship time. Families will make advent wreaths, participate in a simple-gifts Holiday Boutique and learn of service projects in the neighborhood on successive Wednesdays. The themes are "Christ the Light," "Christ the Gift" and "Christ the Servant." All are welcome. Please enter at 1566 Thomas Avenue door. More at www.jehovahlutheran.org or 651-644-1421.

Como Park offers ski lessons

The City of Saint Paul Division of Parks and Recreation is now accepting registrations for Snowboard, Cross Country and Downhill Ski Lessons at the Como Park Ski Center.

The Como Park Ski Center, 1431 North Lexington Parkway, opens on Saturday, December 15 weather permitting. The Como Park Ski Center is a convenient in-town ski area featuring a 1.7 K loop of lighted cross country ski trail for beginner-level skiing and 5K of intermediate/advanced level groomed classic and skate style cross country trails, four lighted tow ropes, snow making, chalet with food service, downhill and cross country ski/snowboard rental shop and affordable lessons taught by professional instructors. In addition to Como Park, cross country ski trails are groomed at the Highland 9 and Phalen Golf Courses. Due to the extensive investment the City made to upgrade the turf, there is no cross country skiing allowed on the Highland National (18 Hole) Golf Course.

The Como Park Ski Chalet has extended Holiday Hours December 22, 2007 through January 1, 2008.

Regular Como Park Ski Chalet Hours are: Saturdays, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sundays, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, CLOSED, and Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 3-9 p.m.

For information about Snowboard, Cross Country and Downhill Ski Lessons, equipment rental, trail conditions, group rates and chalet rentals, please call the Como Park Ski Center Chalet at 651-488-9673 / TTY 651-266-6378, or visit our web-site at www.stpaul.gov/parks.

Babes in Toyland performed by Rosetown

The Rosetown Playhouse Production of Babes in Toyland will open on Friday, December 7 at 7:30 p.m. Babes in Toyland is a blend of holiday songs woven through an imaginative journey into fantasy and adventure. Former Rosetown Director and playwright Tyler Olsen re-tooled the classic story for a cast of 85 which has been rehearsing since October. Two pairs of heroes, Mrs. Kringle's son and daughter and a young couple, foil the evil Mr. Barnaby and a Toymaker run amok. The show is filled with fun characters - crazy police officers, Christmas elves, farmer action figures, a trio of "babes" singers and of course Santa and Mrs. Claus.

The show runs Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. through December 16. There is an additional 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday, December 15. The show plays at RAMS Theatre, 15 East County Road B-2, in the Roseville Area Middle School in Little Canada. Reserved Seat tickets are \$7 - \$12 and can be purchased online at www.rosetownplayhouse.org or at 651-792-7414 x2. Children 5 and under are \$5.



The Rosetown Playhouse Production of Babes in Toyland will open on Friday, December 7 at 7:30 p.m.

Assistance sought for wrapping packages

If you would like to help wrap packages at a retail location in the Midway the week before Christmas, call the office of Hamline Midway Elders, 651-209-6542. Wrappers take two hours shifts and work in pairs. Proceeds from the project will be matched by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

On December 11, Irish Dancers from the Rince na Chroí School will perform at a luncheon sponsored by Hamline Midway Elders sponsors on Tuesday, December 11 from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. in the community space of Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue. A free will donation is taken for the meal. Call 651-209-6542 to make reservations for the luncheon, request free transportation or if you are a senior or caregiver and would like information about our services (www.blocknurse.org).

Celebrate with "The Nativity" movie

The Central Mission is hosting a Christmas Celebration with local artists performing and a time of singing Christmas carols, followed by showing the movie, "The Nativity."

Come as you are or wear that festive outfit that you have been looking for an excuse to wear.

Please join us for this celebration—and don't worry if you can't sing a note—we have big speakers and will turn up the musicians just loud enough to make all of us all sound like super stars.

There is suggested donation of \$2 per person \$5 per family will be given as a gift to - Galtier Elementary Public School & Big Sandy Camp Youth Programs.

The Celebration starts at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 23rd Mark your calendar!

The Central Mission (formerly Twin Cities Christian Fellowship) is

at 1632 Charles Ave. For more information go to www.tcmission.org or call 651-204-6527.

Knox Choir, Orchestra perform December 9

The Chancel Choir and Chamber Orchestra of Knox Presbyterian Church, 1536 West Minnehaha Avenue, will present "One Holy Night," a delightful Christmas musical on Sunday, Dec. 9, at 10 a.m. The program is directed by Lyle Kohlhepp with Cathleen Harris at the organ. The public is invited.

Art show at Bean Factory

"Mr. Michael (and friends) Recycles Bicycles" will feature creative bicycle reuse and bicycle-themed art by Mike and Benita Warns and friends. The show will run throughout the month of December 2007 at Bean Factory, 1342 Thomas Ave., St. Paul, MN

For more information, call 651-641-1037 or send e-mail to warns@pclink.com

Nyberg named Keystone president

The Board of Directors of Keystone Community Services has named interim president Eric Nyberg, M.S.W., L.I.C.S.W., as president of the agency, succeeding Greg Wandersee who retired in May.

A community-based human service organization with headquarters in Merriam Park, Keystone operates three foodshelves, Meals-on-Wheels, youth programs and other services in an area encompassing St. Paul's Midway and North End neighborhoods, the north suburban communities of Ramsey County and beyond.

Nyberg has been on the staff at Keystone (and its predecessor agency, Merriam Park Community Services) since 1984, most recently serving as vice president and chief program and develop-



Eric Nyberg

ment officer. In that capacity, he was responsible for agency programs overall, fund-raising and communications.

A licensed social worker, he worked in a variety of human service and education settings before coming to Keystone. He is a member of the board of the Metropolitan Federation of Alternative Schools, the Senior Consortium of Ramsey County and the Metropolitan Alliance of Connected Communities.

Exotic cookies for sale

Where else can you buy home-made Scandinavian cookies where the proceeds enhance lives? At Lyngblomsten! Join us from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. on both Friday, December 7, and Saturday, December 8, on Lyngblomsten's campus (1415 Almond Ave.) for Lyngblomsten Auxiliary's annual Scandinavian Cookie and Craft Fair.

There you'll find enchanting delicacies (krumkake, sandbakkels, rosettes, lelse, and more) and delightful crafts that will fulfill all of your holiday baking and gift lists and help support the Lyngblomsten Youth Volunteer Scholarship Fund. Numbers for admittance available starting at 9 a.m. on both days. (Questions? Call 651-632-5356 or visit www.lyngblomsten.org.)

Jehovah forum focuses on the Gospel of Matthew

Dr. Mark Schuler, professor of New Testament at Concordia University, will lead the Jehovah Lutheran Adult Forum in a study of "Matthew - the First Gospel" at 9 a.m. Sundays in December. Come to the lounge for coffee, fellowship, and insights into this Gospel from which each Sunday's Gospel readings will be taken in the new church year. This study prepares for Christmas and the year ahead. All are welcome. Call 651-644-1421 for more information.

"Cup of Christmas Tea" Event at Lyngblomsten

Hosted by Lyngblomsten Community Wellness & Education's "Donut" Make You Wonder? program, all are invited to the Lyngblomsten chapel (1415 Almond Ave.) on Thursday, December 13, from 10-11 a.m. for tea, treats, and entertainment at this charming morning retreat starring Warren Hanson—a singer, author, and the illustrator of "A Cup of Christmas Tea," who will delight us with music and readings. No registration necessary. This program is funded by donations, and your generosity is appreciated. (Questions? Call 651-632-5335 or visit www.lyngblomsten.org.)

It was the end of November, and gray was the color of the day. Slate-colored Northern juncos bickered and chased each other around the white pine. Fat gray squirrels hung from the slender twigs of the crab apple tree in their acrobatic quest to eat every apple. The sky was completely overcast and looked like a wall of concrete for days on end. Off and on flurries of snowflakes swirled and spun downward to nestle between the blades of grass and the fallen leaves.

The city lakes were freezing over with ice creeping from the shore towards the center. Flocks of Canadian geese and mallard ducks bobbed in the dark cold water of Como Lake. Suddenly the flock rose up in a panicked roar of wing-beats and honks.

Such terror among the waterfowl is often caused by the sight of a bald eagle cruising low over the open water. The eagles fly over from their winter roosts along the Mississippi River to Como Lake to hunt for unwary or injured ducks.

Bald eagles were seen snatching American coots from the lake's surface this fall. An adult bald eagle was seen perched on the roof of the Park and Recreation Department Maintenance building at Hamline Avenue. Nearby on Lexington Parkway, I saw a bald eagle landing in a tall white pine right next to the mid-day traffic. And this afternoon one was in an ash tree just above the walking path on the westside of the lake. Thirty or even twenty years ago, you couldn't have convinced me that bald eagle sightings like these would become this common.

I've been numbed by all the bad environmental news regarding how many species are in decline, so it is a great relief to hear about a success story. The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) population recovered enough to be delisted from the Endangered Species list in July 2007. There had only been 500 nesting pairs left in the lower 48 states when the Endangered Species Act first became law in 1973. The bald eagle of my youth was a rare creature, which was more myth and symbol than flesh and blood.

My first wildlife guidebook, which I acquired in the mid-1960s, listed the usual information about the bald eagle: average wingspread of 7 feet, lives near water, eats fish primarily. Following those particulars the book said, "This bird, which is our national emblem, is now seriously threatened by its failure to raise enough young each year to maintain the population. Both research and early action are needed if we are to save this species."

Well, it was already too late for "early action." And the "failure to raise enough young" turned out to be our failure. The use of DDT pesticides had passed up through the food chain to the top predator birds. DDT caused the eagles' eggshells to thin to the point that their eggs could not be incubated without breaking. The ban on DDT use came just in time to save a living symbol.

The bald eagle has come to embody a rich diversity of ideas, emotions, and beliefs. As the official national symbol of the United States, the bald eagle represents power, patriotism, and



Nature in the City

By DEB ROBINSON

When an eagle is more than an eagle



Illustration by Deb Robinson

freedom. On the Seal of the President, the bald eagle holds an olive branch in one talon and arrows in

turning of the nation towards peace after WWII.

Native people of the Great Lakes region saw the bald eagle as a strong guardian spirit that possessed the characteristics of clear vision and extreme courage. Eagles are frequently featured in

Plains Native Americans believed that eagles could fly higher than other birds, so eagles became associated with spiritual power.

the other. In 1948, the eagle's head was turned to face the side with the olive branch, which was understood to mean a

the Native American stories as messengers and teachers.

Plains Native Americans believed that eagles could fly higher than other birds, so eagles became associated with spiritual power.

The warrior cultures used eagles feathers (cut and decorated in different ways) to display

one's past military accomplishments. If a warrior wanted to demonstrate extreme bravery in a battle, he would seek out an adversary who wore many eagle feathers.

Some of the symbolism that native and non-native people have ascribed to the bald eagle is based loosely on reality. For example, eagles have retinas shaped in such a way that gives them telephoto magnification abilities. Eagles are capable of soaring to great heights with the help of rising thermals. Bald eagles are indeed dominant hunters. (However, they're not above scavenging or stealing their meals either.)

The masculine bravado may have been inaccurately attributed to our national emblem. A natural history fact worth noting is that female bald eagles, like most birds of prey, are significantly larger and therefore more powerful than the male eagles - now there is a newly informed interpretation of our American icon, the bald eagle.

*Endnotes: *To learn more about bald eagles, visit the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, Minnesota: www.nationaleaglecenter.org *Want to see an eagle up close, visit the Raptor Center on the St. Paul U. of M. campus: www.raptor.cvm.umn.edu *If you're interested in hearing Native American eagles tales, check-out: www.DukeAddicksStoryteller.com *To contact this writer: dmrobinson@bitstream.net*

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Library supporters may get help from City Council budget

By JANE MCCLURE

Supporters of the Hamline-Midway and Hayden Heights Branch Libraries may get some good news from City Hall after all. As the St. Paul City Council nears the end of 2008 budget deliberations this month, it looks like \$308,000 in funding will be restored for those two libraries.

Funds totaling \$287,000 also will be put in place to keep two of 10 recreation centers open. Eight, including Orchard in the South Como neighborhood, will still be shuttered or handed off to others to operate. But the City Council is looking at keeping two East Side centers, Wilder and Prosperity, open.

The Council is considering the use of monies generated through the refinancing of debt associated with District Energy, the heating and cooling system that serves downtown St. Paul and the Capitol area.

City Council members are cautiously optimistic about the possibility of saving the city

services. Hamline-Midway had faced cuts to hours and services, as had Hayden Heights, a library in the city's northeast corner. Earlier this fall Ward Four Council Member Jay Benanav asked that \$50,000 be earmarked for study and planning for the local library branch. Benanav said there is a need to do long-range planning for the library instead of having its hours and services constantly threatened.

The earliest the City Council can adopt its budget is December 12, following the annual truth-in-taxation public hearing. But between then and now, many questions have to be settled. Because the maximum property tax levy was set in September, restoring any services means finding other sources of funding or making other cuts.

One concern is whether the funding proposed to save the library services and the two recreation centers can be replicated in future budgets. Benanav and other council members note that the funding from the District

Energy refinancing may be a one-time source, meaning either one of two things for 2009. Either more money is found for libraries and recreation centers, or those same services face the chopping block again next year.

"I think we have to look hard at the policy implications of using one-time revenues to fund ongoing operations," said Ward Five council Member Lee Helgen. He questioned whether the city is getting itself "deeper into a hole" by funding services in this manner.

The restoration of libraries and recreation center hours are just two outstanding issues the council must decide between now and the end of the year. Other questions include:

*Whether or not to re-establish the citizen participation coordinator position, at a cost of about \$75,000, or provide additional operating funds for the city's 17 district councils. Several councils are pushing for the additional funds but are running into resistance from Helgen,

who opposes increasing the base amount for the six smallest councils.

Council are funded using a formula that factors in a district's population, rate of poverty and percentage of non-English speaking residents. That shifted more money to larger districts. When the formula was implemented a few years ago the six smallest districts, including Como Park and St. Anthony Park, were promised a base amount.

The proposed 2008 city budget provides \$1.216 million for district council operations, holding at the same level as 2007. The councils also split about \$430,000 in neighborhood crime prevention funds.

*What will happen with business, permit and license fees. A recent study of the various fees and charges indicated that increases are needed to cover the city's cost of providing services by Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) staff as well as police and City Attorney's Office time spent on li-

cense violation issues. But increases that were as much as 30 percent for some of the licenses provoked protests and an effort by DSI, businesses and the city's Business Review Council to scale back the increases.

*The fate of the Civic Organization Partnership Program (COPP). That program, which was budgeted at \$178,000 for 2007, has been cut to \$88,000 in the 2008 budget. Some council members are trying to restore those funds. The program was created to support neighborhood-based nonprofit groups that provide services the city cannot provide, such as juvenile diversion, legal aid and aid to domestic abuse victims.

The council could add \$15,250 in crime prevention funding to the COPP account. That money is a by-product of the merger of the three councils that operated for many years in District 13. Snelling-Hamline, Lexington-Hamline and Merriam Park all had separate crime prevention funding in the past.

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Russ Stark

Continued from page 9

"Minority businesses are a challenging group of folks to stay in close contact with," he said. "They do not have time for all the meetings, and a lot do not use e-mail at their businesses. They have done a lot for this side of Saint Paul in the past 10 years."

He said that one of his goals with LRT is to assist the minority businesses survive construction.

"We have expertise in that area locally, and we need to help figure out marketing strategies," Stark said.

He emphasized the importance of the balancing act between accepting national chain businesses, as long as they fit in the community, but also strongly supporting the small businesses in the area.

He admitted the building of the LRT will create some challenges, but he also sees an opportunity to help the smaller businesses actually thrive.

Stark said that, upon reflection, the most difficult part of his campaign was how long it lasted, especially in terms of continuing with his job.

"I was putting in 30 hours a week campaigning, and it became like a second job," he said. "And balancing this with family life was difficult." He said he had anticipated this, but the length of the process was demanding.

Stark said he looks forward to transitioning to the Council, where he will just have one job. He said he knows there will be difficult demands, as well as difficult issues, on a day-to-day basis at times. But Stark says he's ready.

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Igniting Community Development

By SETH BENZIGER

"The Winnipeg" presents an opportunity

Our economy is based on the concept that the market most efficiently allocates resources to their most productive use. History has shown that the market performs very well in that regard. However, there persist areas where the opportunity to make a profit is not sufficient to spur investment. The real estate market in inner city St. Paul provides a great example of these principles at work. A few vacant properties can devolve into blight if demand weakens or if prices remain stubbornly high. In these situations non-profits can play an important role in supporting neighborhoods by attracting nontraditional funds for redevelopment.

Sparc's mixed-use "The Winnipeg" is a good example of a development where the non-profit sector created an opportunity that for-profit developers would not have taken on their

own. Sparc's objective was to replace a hodge-podge of obsolete buildings, vacant land, and awkward residential structures with an attractive and ultimately more productive development. The cost and difficulty of assembling a site large enough to work with presented an obstacle for-profit developers were not willing to hurdle. Thus, Sparc initiated the project, and in partnership with a for-profit developer, was able to make it come to fruition.

The project broke ground in November and represents one of the largest investments on Rice Street in recent memory. The Winnipeg will consist of two three-story buildings on the east side of Rice Street on either side of Winnipeg Avenue. Combined, the buildings will contain 56 apartments affordable to families with a variety of incomes. As well, it will contain

street level commercial space on Rice Street. This project comes at a great time of need for the neighborhood as many rental units have been lost to foreclosure.

In addition to new high quality housing, Sparc hopes that a side effect of this project is to spur additional investment on Rice Street. Changes are already underway with new sidewalks and street lighting.

Further south, Ace Auto recently created a handsome new facility when rebuilding after a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Winnipeg Project

Continued from page 8

The project has 14 financing sources, which include the city, state, county, federal government and private banks.

Sage-Martinson said that in 2004, there was a need for a comprehensive plan and a need for having choices for new developments. The emphasis was on Rice Street. He said that in 2005 a small area plan promoted mixed use, and the stage was set for pursuing the Winnipeg project. Proponents of the project went before the District 6 Land Use Task Force six times, bringing plans in early to show the Task Force. He said the Sparc Housing Committee also provided a lot of insight.

Sage-Martinson said today's concept came about starting with one small parcel of land Sparc transferred 10 years ago to the Flower Hut.

"Good quality housing for working families always is in demand," he said. "The way the housing market has turned has made this kind of housing more desirable, based on the long-term market need."

He said the most time-consuming part of the project has been securing financing from 14 different sources. "Each source has its own cycle and time line," he noted. "This is where we have spent the last year, finalizing the process."

Sparc and Legacy Management and Development Corporation, as co-developers, have worked on the designing, financing and building. Once the development is finished, it will be owned by Legacy in partnership with one of the funders.

Legacy is the developer that completed the Rondo Library at University and Dale, which also

features housing over the library space. The company was also the developer of the Selby Grotto building that houses a fitness business and apartments, according to Sage-Martinson.

Construction for the Winnipeg begins this month. Sage-Martinson admitted that a December start date will entail some extra challenges.

"We'll get the foundation dug and poured, and work to get things enclosed as quickly as possible. We will begin renting in earnest once the building takes shape, perhaps by next September." No commercial or residential tenants have been selected yet. The project is due to be completed by December 2008.

At the ground-breaking, Legacy and Sparc presented checks to the God Squad, Blooming Rice Street project and District 6. The God Squad is a group of pastors and lay persons working with youth, and the Blooming Rice Street project is a group of businesses that has beautified the area with flowers. District 6 has created colorful Rice Street logos that will be placed on banners along the street.

"The Winnipeg is a centerpiece for revitalization, given the location and size of the investment," Sage-Martinson said. "It's a very transit-oriented design, accessible to people on foot."

And the project has been a challenge. Much like the bitterly cold weather that greeted the audience at the ground-breaking, working on the Winnipeg development is "not for the faint of heart," to quote Howard Goldman, a HUD representative who addressed the crowd. He said, however, that although the process is complicated and time-consuming and requires a lot of partners to make it work, the Winnipeg will serve as a model on how to finance affordable housing.



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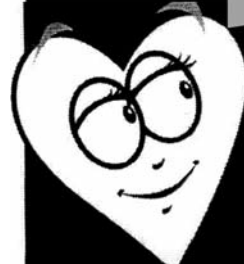
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Electronic billboard proposals may have mixed impact on Midway area

By JANE MCCLURE

Proposals to allow a limited number of electronic billboards will have a mixed effect on Midway area neighborhoods. Some areas could see billboards come down, especially in residential areas. But in neighborhoods close to Interstate 94, there could be impacts from spillover light and glare. The St. Anthony Park Community Council and District 13 Council, which represent neighborhoods near freeways, are among the groups calling for a total ban on the new billboard technology.

St. Anthony Park resident Robert Straughn said limiting the electronic signs to freeways does little to protect citizens. "In a built-up city like St. Paul, there is no distinction between freeways and our neighborhoods," he said.

But a total ban may not be likely, given the city's history of litigation with billboard companies. Lawsuits and state law changes that have allowed billboards to remain in place are part of St. Paul's checkered history of trying to more tightly regulate

outdoor advertising.

The St. Paul City Council could adopt new regulations on electronic billboards as soon as December 12. Those regulations would take effect in January, just before a year-long moratorium on the signs ends. The proposal was set for a public hearing December 5.

Electronic signs, known as dynamic displays, have electronic message that change. The first one along a St. Paul freeway went up more than a year ago, near the Downtowner Car Wash near I-94.

Controversy over where – or if – the electronic signs are appropriate has ignited St. Paul's decade-long billboard battles. Representatives of billboard companies CBS Outdoor and Clear Channel Outdoor want a trade-down if it is structured in a way that allows them to put up the new signs in place of existing freeway billboards. But they caution that too stringent a set of regulations could mean that no signs could come down at all.

Anti-billboard activists say the electronic signs should be

banned outright, claiming the signs are distracting to drivers, create spillover light pollution and shouldn't be allowed at all. The anti-billboard group Scenic St. Paul has been leading the opposition.

Under the proposal currently before the City Council, electronic billboards would be allowed along interstate highways in St. Paul, but only if billboard companies agree to remove a set number of billboards in residential neighborhoods, historic districts, the downtown area and the Mississippi River corridor. In November the St. Paul Planning Commission debated the proposal at length before amending it.

The ordinance is on a fast track for approval as a city moratorium on electronic signs ends in late January 2008. The City Council enacted the moratorium last year due to concerns about electronic signs and the potential distractions they could create for motorists. But the tight timeline for approval of new regulations has frustrated the Planning Commission and those on all sides of the sign issues.

St. Paul is just one of a number of Twin Cities communities wrestling with electronic billboards regulatory issues as the signs are a technology relatively new to the Twin Cities. Recently the League of Minnesota Cities weighed in with a bill-

boards study and proposed regulations. The City of Minnetonka recently adopted regulations allowing trade-downs for signs, as part of an agreement with Clear Channel.

The St. Paul City Attorney's Office has indicated that an outright ban may be difficult for the city to uphold if there is a court challenge. Billboards in St. Paul are considered non-conforming uses. Recent changes to state law governing non-conforming uses make it much more difficult to remove such uses permanently.

"The decision is, should we be real tough and prohibit electronic signs and go into the courtroom to decide this issue," said St. Paul Planning Administrator Larry Soderholm.

Some key provisions of St. Paul's proposed regulations include:

*Electronic billboards would be allowed along I-94 and along I-35E north of I-94. City staff is recommending the signs not be allowed along Highway 280, near the LaFayette Bridge and the I-35E-Shepard Road area. Billboard industry representatives object to the removal of Highway 280, saying a few billboards should be allowed there.

*Electronic billboards would have to be placed at least 1,000 feet from residences with windows facing the electronic display.

*Electronic billboards would have to have a minimum one-mile separation from each other.

*Only one sign face on a billboard structure could be converted into an electronic sign.

*A number of conditions are recommended for the displays themselves, including a minimum 15-inch height limit on sign copy, and keeping each image and message constant for at least eight seconds. The city would have the ability to regulate brightness of the signs.

The trade-down could work in different ways, said Soderholm. Planning staff believe there are about 10-15 prospective new electronic billboard locations. In exchange, as many as 100 neighborhood billboards could come down. That number depends on whether the decision is a 4:1 or 6:1 ratio of old billboards to new is selected. It also would depend on the square footage of the billboards removed. The Planning Commission has recommended that for every four feet on unlit neighborhood billboard space taken down, one square foot of electronic signage could go up. That ratio changes to 6:1 for lit billboards.

The decision on which billboards come down would be made by city staff, in cooperation with billboard companies.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



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Community development

Continued from page 13

fire. Directly across the street from Ace Auto, United Products announced they intend to keep their headquarters on Rice Street and have unveiled plans to build a multi-million dollar office and showroom complex. Sparc hopes that The Winnipeg and other investments by existing businesses will help attract new businesses and investments to the neighborhood. As there are currently three buildings for sale directly adjacent to the location of The Winnipeg, there is a great opportunity for a dramatic change in the fortunes of lower Rice Street in the North End.

In my first few years working for Sparc, to a large extent the economy was providing ample opportunity for residential improvement in the neighborhoods we serve. It seemed like at least one house on every block had a contractor's sign up in the front yard. Sparc's role in the neighborhood and rising home values made financing relatively easy to obtain. Now as the housing and financial markets have changed, the present challenge comes as Sparc must find ways to continue to help others make those improvements and investments when the market is unwilling.

(Seth Benziger is the Program Manager of Sparc responsible for home improvement financing programs. He would love to hear your feedback or thoughts; he can be reached at seth@sparcweb.org or at 651-488-1039.)

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Billboard proposals

Continued from page 14

One of the issues the Planning Commission debated at length is whether incentives, such as a lower trade-down ratio, should be used to get billboards out of residential neighborhood, historic districts, the downtown area and the Mississippi River corridor. The commission decided on a 7-6 vote to not have a lower ratio and to simply require that billboards in the trade-down come down in those areas first.

Much of the debate between billboard companies and anti-billboard activists centers on whether or not electronic signs

are a distraction to motorists. Clear Channel attorney Marvin Liszt objected to the idea of singling out the signs as a distraction in the ordinance, saying that drivers' use of cell phones, eating and drinking are just as distracting. Clear Channel General Manager Lee Ann Muller agreed, saying that a recently released federal highway Administration study indicates that what goes on inside of a vehicle is more distracting than what goes on outside of the vehicle.

Foes of electronic billboards said the signs are distracting to motorists. Some speakers cited the electronic signs on the Xcel Energy Center as distracting, visual blight. Those are smaller than an electronic billboard could be. "I don't think you could find a worse place to put an electronic sign than along

freeways," said Straughn.

"They're ugly, they're unsafe and they have environmental consequences," said John Mannillo of Scenic St. Paul. "These billboards are the brightest image in a driver's line of vision."

St. Anthony Park resident Jonathan Bentley, whose family lives near Highway 280, already has a large lighted billboard visible from his backyard. He said its lights are "only slightly less bright than the noon-day sun at the equator." He said an electronic sign or signs there would be even more of an intrusion.

Muller said it's not accurate to compare electronic signs to the signs on the arena, which are permitted as a one-of-a-kind use. "They are not television, they do not have motion," she said. "They never will have motion."

Billboard companies also

expressed some reservations about the ordinance, especially its proposals to trade down signs. Trade downs have worked in other cities, said Soderholm. In Minneapolis, about 300 neighborhood billboards have been removed with fewer, larger signs allowed near freeways. When St. Paul banned new billboards seven years ago, it rejected the idea of a trade-down provision in its ordinance.

"This is what everybody had in mind all along, to get some of the signs out of the neighborhoods," said Bob Graiziger, general manager of CBS Outdoor. But he and John Bodger, real estate manager for CBS, said that smaller companies could stand to lose more if a trade-down plan doesn't consider their needs.

CBS owns 49 billboards in

St. Paul. If the square footage ratio is too high, "we could remove 49 signs and we couldn't build one digital sign," Bodger said.

"There has to be a real incentive," said Liszt. "Otherwise the program does not work."

Liszt also cautioned the Zoning Committee that the issue of trade-downs may be complicated by questions of property owners' rights. Sign companies lease many of their rooftop and roadside locations from private property owners. Liszt questioned whether the property owners would have the legal right to replace signs, if one is traded away for an electronic freeway sign. City staff is recommending that this be looked at on a case by case basis to make sure signs are permanently removed.

Classifieds

Continued from page 15

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For more information or an application, contact Jun-Li Wang, community organizer, Hamline-Midway Coalition at 651-646-1986 or jwang@hamlinemidwaycoalition.org.

The application deadline is 4 p.m. on Friday, December 7, 2007.



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