



monitor

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Decision ends 118 years of tradition...

St. Bernard's Elementary School to close its doors



SAINT BERNARD

One hundred eighteen years of tradition will end in June as St. Bernard's Elementary, founded by the Sisters of St. Benedictine, closes its doors. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

By JAN WILLMS

One hundred eighteen years of tradition will end in June as St. Bernard's Elementary, founded by the Sisters of St. Benedictine, closes its doors.

The recent decision to shut down the school at 180 Rose Avenue was not an easy one, according to President and Principal Jennifer Cassidy.

She said the school, established to provide learning for German immigrant children, has been an anchor of the community.

"It's bittersweet," she said. "We are losing the grade school, but are hopeful that the high school can continue to have a key presence in the community."

The high school will be restructured into a Catholic International Baccalaureate School.

Up until a few weeks ago, Cassidy said the vision had been to develop a baccalaureate program in the grade school.

"The grade school was four years into the process of International Baccalaureate (IB)," Cassidy said. "It was soon to be authorized, and we were right at the brink (of getting the program

started.)", she said.

But the facts of life intervened.

"The current economy, people struggling with finances and more challenges in providing financial assistance to parents were all factors in the decision to

close," Cassidy said.

The student population had dwindled to 137 students, with increasing numbers of students seeming unlikely.

"With the IB program, we had hoped we would attract enrollment over time," Cassidy stat-

ed. "We needed some funding assistance, and we cast our net very wide. We met with 50-80 people, and many were willing to help fund it. We met with individuals." Cassidy said a tentative campaign was set up.

But donors were starting to pull back. Cassidy found people had made prior commitments and were struggling to keep them. Adding anything new was impossible, and she said people were leery of making new commitments.

She said one of the donors described the situation clearly. He said "It was the perfect plan at the most imperfect time."

"We had to change direction and go to Plan B," she said. That plan was to focus on the high school, which was more financially viable, with a higher tuition.

"We wanted some presence, and so we will continue with the St. Bernard's High School and continue with the IB program," Cassidy explained.

The College of St. Thomas will be supportive with its involvement in the IB program.



The student population at St. Bernard's had dwindled recently to 137 students, with the likelihood of increasing the number of students seeming unlikely. (Photo courtesy of St. Bernard's Elementary)

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Monitor in a Minute

Fire damaged building must be repaired

A fire-damaged University Avenue building must be removed or repaired within 15 days, the St. Paul City Council decided April 1. That means 1493 University Av. will most likely be razed, despite efforts to save it.

No one appeared at the City Council public hearing to speak for saving the building, which is across University Avenue from Midway Center. Legislative Hearing Officer Marcia Moermond said that one challenge in trying to get the building repaired is that it has multiple interested parties, including a property ownership corporation and two mortgage companies. Disagreements between the parties mean that an insurance settlement check, which could be used to rehabilitate the building, cannot be released.

At a legislative hearing last month, Moermond told the property owner that a \$5,000 bond had to be posted by April 1 if the repairs were to go forward. That didn't happen so she asked the council to approve the remove or repair order.

Another strike against potential reuse of the property is that it lacks any off-street parking spaces.

The two-story brick retail storefront-warehouse building was built in 1918. It was most recently used as an auto parts and supply business but had been vacant since May 2005.

A tenant had been found for the building a few years ago and it was undergoing rehabilitation before it was damaged by fire in April 2008. Damage is estimated at \$550,000.

The fire was believed to have been intentionally set. The fire largely gutted the building and windows are still missing. But the biggest nuisance, according to city

property code enforcement staff, is that bricks have started to fall off of the building and cause a hazard to pedestrians. Garbage dumping behind the property is also a problem. City crews have had to clean up the property 29 times in the past few years. Some neighbors have complained that parts of the building were occupied illegally by squatters, but city staff found no evidence of that.

Even though some neighborhood residents and preservationists had wanted to see the building saved, the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) staff indicated that the building isn't one that is considered to be part of the neighborhood's industrial heritage. A historic and cultural survey done in conjunction with Central Corridor didn't indicate that the building had significance.

CommonBond closer to new headquarters

CommonBond is one step closer to building its corporate headquarters at Lexington Parkway and St. Anthony Avenue, as the St. Paul City Council voted unanimously March 18 to approve an alley vacation needed for the project.

The council voted to vacate an east-west alley in the block. The alley vacation allows CommonBond, a nonprofit housing and social services provider, to consolidate properties it owns in the area.

CommonBond has purchased the former Lexington Nursing Home and wishes to convert that into supportive housing. The nonprofit also wants to build a new headquarters along Lexington, to replace its office space downtown. Recently a vacant commercial building and a house on part of the site were torn down to make way for the project.

The project has been controversial as it would be built just east of a small pocket of homes along Central Avenue. The small neighborhood was gradually isolated

over the years after Interstate 94, the Central Medical Building, and the old Lexington Shopping Center were built.

Some residents have lived there for decades and don't want to leave their homes. They have accused CommonBond of trying to break up the block by gradually buying up properties and forcing them out. CommonBond is still in the process of trying to obtain consent petition signatures to rezone part of the property.

Over the past several months residents of Central Avenue and CommonBond have worked with the Union Park District Council and Lexington Hamline Community Council on a community benefits agreement meant to protect the interests of the home owners who choose to stay in the neighborhood. The district council hosted a meeting March 10 to work on the agreement but no final pact has been announced yet.

Concordia stadium wins Commission approval

Barring an appeal to the St. Paul City Council, Concordia University officials can start work on Sea Foam Stadium this spring. The stadium plans won unanimous approval from the full St. Paul Planning Commission March 13.

The \$14.5 million stadium should be open this fall.

Earlier this month the commission's Zoning Committee recommended approval of changes to the university's conditional use permit, to expand the campus boundary west and include the stadium site. The stadium will be located southwest of the Concordia Avenue-Hamline Avenue intersection, on land that is currently used for parking, field space and a community garden. The new stadium will tie into Fandrei Hall, a building the university bought recently from the St. Paul Water Utility.

The Planning Commission also approved modifications to the

parking requirements for the new stadium, which will have 2,000 seats. The city requires a stadium of this size to have 383 off-street parking spaces but the site plan has only 199 spaces adjacent to the stadium. However, Concordia officials do have another 110 parking spaces in lots 600 feet from the stadium, as well as an additional 237 spaces in lots on Hamline and Marshall. Traffic on game days will be directed to these lots.

The stadium will be used for football, soccer, track and other sports. It will have an inflatable dome during the winter months, much like the stadium at Augsburg College in Minneapolis does. The stadium will have artificial turf and a press box. Plans call for possible expansion of the seating in the future. That will require further amendments to the university's conditional use permit and more accommodations for off-street parking.

The name Sea Foam Stadium comes from the stadium's major donor, a lubricants and motor treatment manufacturing company.

The plans have the support of the Union Park District Council but are opposed by business owners west of the site, who are already concerned about overflow parking from the university.

Concordia lost its original football field years ago when Interstate 94 was built. In recent years football games have been played west of Gangelhoff Center.

Concordia, like all other St. Paul colleges and universities, is required to have a conditional use permit that sets campus boundaries, dictates heights and setbacks of new buildings, caps enrollment and lays out minimum parking requirements. Concordia's permit dates from the mid-1980s but no one on the city staff or from the university is sure why the permit wasn't modified in the past to include the properties at the stadium site.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Volunteers partner with Pepsi at North End Elementary

On Saturday, March 28, Rebuilding Together Twin Cities partnered with the local Pepsi Bottling Group to do some work at North End Elementary in St. Paul. At left below, volunteers from the local Pepsi Bottling Group gather outside North End Elementary in St. Paul after a long day of working inside the school painting, assembling shelves and organizing classrooms and the library. Below right, Bryce White and Willis Myrick with Pepsi organize and code library books in the North End Elementary library. Top right, Volunteers from the local Pepsi Bottling Group install new organization shelving in a classroom at North End Elementary.



St. Bernard's

Continued from page 1

Cassidy said that back in 2003, when the grade school's continuation was threatened, the Archdiocese and school officials knew they had to do something radically different, and the IB plan was made. Even six weeks ago, that plan seemed to be working. But the economic times, lack of funding and students, made the quick change a reality.

Tom Faschingbauer of the North End Community Foundation remembers the foundation doing a matching grant to save the grade school in 2003.

"We were the forerunner in putting up a matching grant in 2003 for \$50,000," He added that a lot of other contributors saw the community support for the school and added to the funding.

"My understanding is that it has been difficult to make running the school economically feasible," he said. "We have not been approached in an attempt to save the grade school. I think they chose the lesser of two evils; they could have closed both schools, but they're keeping the high school open."

For many, the passing of the grade school is a momentous event.

Chris Rider graduated from both the grade school and high school, and her dad graduated from the grade school in 1944.

"The loss is difficult," she said. "It is sad to see something that was such a part of my life closing. My sister and I plan to take a walk through the grade school before it closes."

Lauren Buonincontro currently has two girls in the grade school, in grades two and five.

"The girls were devastated," she said. "They thought they would continue here through high school. It's a tough one to explain to them."

She recalled special events, such as the Christmas concerts, and students walking around the lake to get pledges for the school.

Monitor



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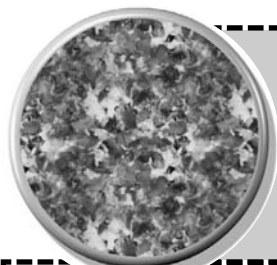


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Central Corridor improvements could be financed by TIF funds

By JANE MCCLURE

Long-awaited streetscape and parking improvements along University Avenue, in conjunction with the Central Corridor light rail project, are one step closer to reality. But how to pay for these improvements remains controversial and is an issue that will play out in the weeks ahead.

On a 5-1 vote March 24 the Ramsey County Board approved a complex City of St. Paul plan that would pay for \$37 million in various light rail-related improvements through tax increment financing (TIF). The measure will take \$1.9 million out of the county's coffers each year until 2029. Even if the St. Paul City Council and St. Paul School Board sign off on the TIF plan, it still needs approval from the 2009 Minnesota Legislature to generate the TIF dollars.

The city is proposing to take four existing TIF districts along the light rail route, pool their income and extend their lives by 20 years. TIF is a development tool that allows a city to capture increased value from an improved property. The increased property tax dollars that result from redevelopment don't go to the local units of government but are instead used to pay for infrastructure and public improvements. The property is taxed at its pre-redevelopment value for a set time, to

Streetscape and parking improvements aren't part of the 11-mile, \$914 light rail project bud-

et, much to the dismay of city officials and University Avenue business leaders. University streetscape work has been delayed for years in anticipation that the light rail project would cover the costs. But because the federal government doesn't consider streetscape improvements and parking to be eligible project expenses, the city must either find a way to cover those costs. The TIF costs are just part of a \$155 million list of improvements the city would like in conjunction with the light rail line.

Commissioner Janice Rettman cast the lone County Board vote against the proposal March 24. While saying she supports University Avenue businesses and their needs, Rettman questioned whether several provisions of the city's TIF plan are even legal. The city's legislation does seek variances from several technical provisions of state TIF law.

"This action is not just an extension and merging of four TIF districts," said Rettman. "It to me is an action that is asking Ramsey County to forgo what was originally promised in original TIFs that the defeasance would be time-certain or earlier and the properties returned to the tax rolls."

Rettman also pointed out that by supporting the TIF plan, the county is losing money it could be using for needed service and is forcing other property taxpayers to pick up those costs.

But other commissioners said they would support the city's request, while acknowledging that the county would lose funds and that many questions still have to be resolved.

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt said she is confident state lawmakers will address the legal and technical concerns Rettman has raised about the TIF plan.

"I'm not a fan of TIF," said Commissioner Rafael Ortega. "But at this point, given the economic environment we're facing, the city has few resources left." Ortega also said the construction tied to the city's improvements could be viewed as a jobs creation measure.

"I wish we had another financial tool but at this point I don't see one," Ortega said.

Nancy Homans, policy director for Mayor Chris Coleman, told commissioners that the city has few options to pay for the improvements. "We've been scrambling," she said.

The TIF dollars would be used for the aspects of the project that need to be done right away. Streetscape improvements need to be done when the light rail line is built, so that the area isn't disrupted twice by construction. Construction is to start in 2010 and be completed by 2014.

The estimated cost breakdown is \$25.2 million for new street lights, trees, landscaping, public art and other streetscape work; \$4.2 million to replace lost parking along University and

\$21.8 million to buy land and develop a transit station/parking facility in the block bounded by Fourth, Cedar, Fifth and Minnesota streets. Only a portion of the TIF could be used to pay for the downtown project.

But the TIF revenue still doesn't cover everything the city wants to do in conjunction with Central Corridor so other funds are being sought. The city has a wish list of \$155 million in costs tied to Central Corridor and the land use plans developed along the light rail line.

The detailed cost breakdown for the city's Central Corridor improvements gives top priority to the University Avenue streetscape work, which would start in 2010 with project construction. Another high priority is acquisition of a former bank building and a parking lot downtown, at a cost of \$5.5 million. Some downtown streetscape work is also in the first priority list, bringing that total to \$30.8 million.

One potential obstacle to the downtown transit station and development tied to that site would be opposition from Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune. Thune said he is skeptical that the city would have to pay that much for the properties. "I think that is just way too much money," he said.

The second priority items include \$16.2 million to develop the downtown site for underground parking, \$9 million for acquisition

of part of the former Diamond Products/Gillette property in Lowertown and the \$4.2 million for University Avenue parking mitigation. The second priority items total \$29.4 million.

Part of the former Diamond Products/Gillette property is being purchased to house a light rail operations and maintenance facility. City officials want the rest of the property purchased so it can be redeveloped. One idea that has surfaced for redevelopment is putting the St. Paul Saints baseball team's stadium there.

The third priority is \$95.2 million in funding for business mitigation, affordable housing, bicycle/pedestrian connections, public art and parks.

City staff has identified potential funding sources for all of these items, along with TIF. One is \$5 million over five years out of the city's CIB. Another is \$1 million per year for four years from the Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) Program. Property assessments could raise another \$4.3 million. About \$1 million could come from federal funds. Other funding sources without dollar amounts attached could include state bonding, franchise fees, grants and requiring new developers to pay for their own streetscape work. The city has even identified Ramsey County Active Living, a program which promotes walking as exercise, to fund benches at a cost of \$600 per bench.

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Impressions that last a lifetime....

Agreements reached on Central Corridor, but Met Council still worries about delays

By JANE MCCLURE

Key agreements on aspects of the Central Corridor light rail project still haven't eased concerns that the project is vulnerable to controversy and cost changes. Despite agreements between the Metropolitan Council on noise and vibration issues affecting Minnesota Public Radio and two churches, and on the location of the operations and maintenance facility in Lowertown, Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell is still worried that the project won't be able to start construction next year and start operations in 2014.

If the project is delayed another year, that in turn would add \$27 million to the budget. Bell said that means Ramsey County, the state and a regional group of counties that review and fund transit would all have to kick in more money.

"We are on the knife's edge right now, at being able to make 2014," said Bell. A strict project timeline on top of costs that could change, as well as unresolved issues along the line, add complications to the project.

Like other federal transit projects, Central Corridor must meet a cost-effectiveness index based on ridership, construction costs and other factors. Exceed that index and the changes for federal assistance are diminished.

Along with the costs are factors that would indicate to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) that there are unresolved issues with the project, another potential strike against funding. The challenges ahead include:

*The project costs. Central Corridor project staff is keeping a sharp eye on any potential changes to materials costs. One question mark is how the federal economic stimulus package, and countless construction projects throughout the nation, could impact materials

costs.

*The University of Minnesota's request to mitigate the impacts of the planned Washington Avenue transit mall. Last year U officials lost their fight to have trains go below-grade along Washington. But the trains on the street means rerouting traffic, making other physical improvements to Washington and other streets, and looking at the impacts on U classrooms, clinics and labs.

One of the U of M's latest requests is to have a free fare zone between Stadium Village and the West Bank stations. Project officials say no, because it would mean adding 16 light rail vehicles and going immediately to three-vehicle trains.

The U is also asking the light rail project to provide reimbursement for staff and consultant costs, compensate for lost parking revenue and provide a blanket indemnification for the project.

*The streetscape improvements sought along University Avenue. (See related story.) How those are paid for and timed could affect the transit project.

*Improvements in the state capitol area.

*What is needed to acquire property in downtown St. Paul, at Fourth and Cedar, for a transit station and related development? The right-of-way costs are not in the project budget.

"There's no room for any delays or hesitation," said Bell. "right now we're hanging on by a thread."

The project did get some good news April 8 when three months of negotiations, testing and researched ended with a deal between Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Public Radio President announced that the Met Council and MPR have entered into an agreement to mitigate the impact of light rail transit (LRT) on the MPR Broadcast



The Central Corridor project did get some good news April 8 when three months of negotiations, testing and researched ended with a deal between Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Public Radio President announced that the Met Council and MPR have entered into an agreement to mitigate the impact of light rail transit (LRT) on the MPR Broadcast.

Center on Cedar Street.

"This is a good agreement," Bell and MPR President Bill Kling said. "It protects the integrity of the MPR Broadcast Center – a tremendous asset to our city, our community and our state – and moves the Central Corridor light rail project forward – a project that will be an economic and environmental boon for all of us. It wasn't an easy agreement – both sides had serious, legitimate problems and concerns to be addressed. And it isn't a perfect agreement – everyone had to 'give' on items of great importance to reach this compromise. But it is a reasonable agreement, one that creates a framework for today and for the future."

"This agreement is the product of months of painstaking work by consultants and staff of both the project and MPR," Bell said. "It will protect the world-class broadcast facilities of MPR while keeping this vital transit improvement project on schedule and within budget."

The Central Corridor LRT line is a vital element in the Council's vision to expand our transit system, grow ridership and improve mobility for everyone. It also will provide improved access to employment, educational and economic opportunities along the corridor and beyond.

"I'm pleased that we've reached an agreement that allows light rail to go forward and that largely protects our unique broadcast facility from the noise and vibration of the trains," said Kling.

"The Met Council took our concerns seriously and worked with us to craft a plan that will address the most significant impacts of the LRT line running so close to our studios."

As part of the agreement, MPR will seek other sources of funding for window reglazing to mitigate LRT noise impacts on critical listening spaces within its broadcast center, an effort supported by both the Met Council and the City of St.

Paul.

The 11-mile, \$914 million LRT line will run on University and Washington Avenues from downtown St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis, connecting with the existing Hiawatha line and terminating at a new intermodal station near the new Twins ballpark. That station also will serve the new Northstar commuter rail line, which is scheduled for completion this fall.

Under the mitigation plan, the Central Corridor project will:

- Install a 700-foot-long floating slab or its performance equivalent for the full length of the MPR building and two nearby historic churches to mitigate vibration and ground-borne noise from the train.
- Move a planned crossover switch from a location near MPR to a new location north of I-94, removing another source of LRT-generated vibration.
- Work with MPR to design, install and pay for modifications to three MPR studios to achieve "acoustical isolation" from LRT-generated noise.
- Maintain LRT vibration levels below specific thresholds within 32 recording and broadcast studios in the MPR Broadcast Center.
- Restrict the use of train horns in a "quiet zone" in the area immediately surrounding MPR and the churches.


Under the agreement, the council will monitor the noise and vibration impacts of the line during its construction, testing and first year of operation to ensure the effectiveness of the mitigation plan and address any variances of agreed-upon mitigation criteria.



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Back to the drawing board for Lexington and Larpenteur

By DEBORAH BROTZ

About 50 people attended a community meeting hosted by District 10 Community Council's Land Use Committee to review and comment on the Lexington-Larpenteur Node Study, which was commissioned by the City of St. Paul and prepared by the Mississippi Riverfront Corp. in 2008. Now that people have voiced their likes and dislikes, it's back to the drawing board.

The Node Study is a small area plan, made up of several conceptual drawings, for the businesses and a few residential homes at and around the two block intersection of Lexington, Larpenteur, and California. After a community meeting and design charrette in March 2008, the Node Study was drafted with several options for a possible land use plan for the intersection in May 2008.

The Study grew out of a dispute between neighbors and MGM Liquor Warehouse, when they tore down a fence that separated residential houses and the alley behind MGM in November 2007. While the City of St. Paul brought a lawsuit against MGM, they lost at trial and then ap-

pealed. In early June, a decision is expected by the Court of Appeals.

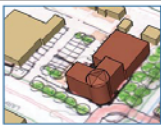
As a result of the dispute over the fence, the City of St. Paul asked St. Paul Mississippi Riverfront Corp. with Tim Griffin, from St. Paul on the Mississippi Design Center, as lead designer, to work with the neighborhood to design a plan.

"The Node Study is just a study," said Tom Sheu, vice-chair of District 10 Community Council Board of Directors and chair of the District 10 Land Use Committee. "It's completely conceptual."

Since the Node Study was done a year ago, MGM has bought four or five houses behind the store on California Avenue and Paster bought two houses south of Flowerama on Lexington and has expressed an interest in buying Ted's Bar with the same idea of redeveloping their respective properties.

"Neighbors are quite concerned that commercial development will creep into Como Park if they get permission to do a development," said Sheu. "This redevelopment might conflict with the vision of the Node Study, which is meant to be their vision."

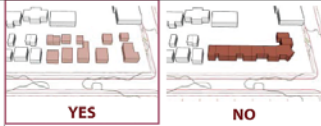
These designs represent possible directions for redevelopment at Lexington and Larpenteur. The Como neighborhood is in a midst of a lengthy dialogue about what the future intersection should look like, and the next meeting on the topic will occur April 20 at 7 p.m. at the Street Car Station, 1224 Lexington Parkway North.



1/2 Block Redevelopment
Encourage a 2-4 story development built to the corner and side parking, encompassing lots currently occupied by Flowerama, Ted's Bar, and two single-family houses.



Corner Redevelopment
Define the building corner as entrance into the neighborhood.



Neighborhood Redevelopment
Keep single family homes that responds to the character of the neighborhood.



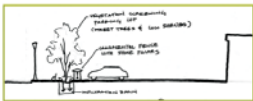
Bus Shelter



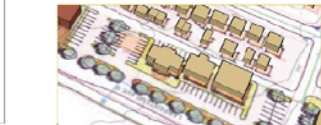
Building Set-Back
Continue 25' building set-back North along Lexington Parkway. Widen sidewalk and reforest.



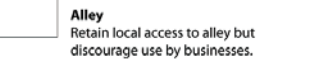
Crosswalk
Create a 15' wide crosswalk across Larpenteur Avenue and Lexington Parkway with pervious paving to provide a safe crossing. Install public art or monument and inquire if the city of Roseville wants to complete the treatment.



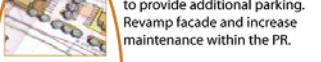
Larpenteur Avenue Streetscape
Improve streetscape design along by Larpenteur increasing stormwater management and complement urban design across the street in Roseville. Plant trees and/or flower planters and incorporate public art when possible. Reduce curb-cut on to Larpenteur Avenue.



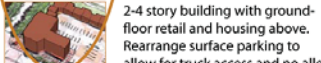
Parking and Access
Reconfigure parking to allow more efficient use of land.



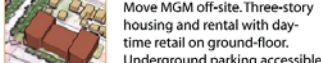
Alley
Retain local access to alley but discourage use by businesses.



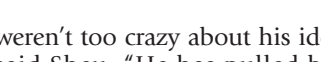
MGM Southwest Corner
Place MGM headquarters and offices above existing store to provide additional parking. Revamp facade and increase maintenance within the PR.



New one-story building
Set-back to accommodate dining and entrance. Widen alley for drop-off and loading. Reconfigure surface parking for increased efficiency.



2-4 story building
With ground-floor retail and housing above. Rearrange surface parking to allow for truck access and no alley access from Lexington Parkway.



Move MGM off-site
Three-story housing and rental with day-time retail on ground-floor. Underground parking accessible from back alley.

Neighbors liked several aspects of the Node Study: nothing taller than one or two stories, no change of zoning, and houses left as they are on California and Lexington.

"No one likes the look of Flowerama or Ted's Bar," said Sheu. "They want greater setbacks and some green space."

The April 7 meeting was also an opportunity for people to

comment on a conceptual plan proposed by Paster Enterprises for the possible redevelopment of the Flowerama site, which is part of the area encompassed by the Node Study. Howard Paster, president of Paster Enterprises, hosted a meeting with potentially affected neighbors on March 18, 2009, and has contacted surrounding neighbors with his concept.

"Neighbors expressed they

weren't too crazy about his idea," said Sheu. "He has pulled back his plans and went back to the drawing board."

Sheu says one nice thing about the April 7 meeting was that Penny Simison, a senior planner with St. Paul Planning and Economic Development, explained the whole zoning process.

"People were worried someone could rush in and change it from residential to commercial," he said. "It's a very difficult, cumbersome process. It made people feel better that it could not happen overnight."

People also wondered if a parade of things was going to happen.

"There's no plan on the table," said Sheu. "We're here to be constructive about what their vision is. I was worried a lot of people would be yelling at each other. Some people thought Griffin misinterpreted what they asked him to design a year ago. But, there's nothing in the works. There's no plan unless they approve it and give it their blessing."

Another Land Use Committee meeting is scheduled for April 20, at 7 p.m., at the Historic Street Car Station.

"Neighbors who have organized have a very large map of the Node Study with study tabs of their likes or dislikes—what Mr. Griffin got right, wrong, or left out," said Sheu. "We want to get all the neighbors to give us a wish list of what a possible redevelopment would look like. We hope to get a design everybody likes. Here's what we want to see if there's redevelopment of the area."

There are a series of steps in creating a small area plan. Currently, the Node Study has been created and the first public comment as been made on it. In order for it to become part of the comprehensive plan, the District 10 Board must approve it and recommend the City Council adopt it.

"We're quite away off from that," said Sheu. "Helgen commissioned the Node Study and asked Mr. Griffin to design it with citizen input as a response to the MGM action. If redevelopment is going to occur, let's have a say in how it's going to look."

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Some cuts may be postponed til after legislative session...

Budget issues continue to roil St. Paul neighborhoods

By JANE MCCLURE

Budget issues continue to roil area neighborhoods as St. Paul faces a \$13.4 million budget shortfall for 2009 alone, with a plus-\$30 million shortfall anticipated for 2010. But decisions on a number of measures, ranging from closing the Hamline Midway Branch Library to slashing district council funding, may be postponed until after the 2009 legislative session.

St. Paul and other cities are eyeing the trickle-down effects of a projected \$4.6 billion state shortfall over the next two years. Gov. Tim Pawlenty has proposed cutting \$244.9 million in LGA. St. Paul would lose \$23.7 million. But that could change when state lawmakers act on the state budget later this spring.

Last month Mayor Chris Coleman met with district council representatives and told them they could be facing a funding cut of up to 14 percent. For many of the councils that could mean laying off or cutting back staff and office hours. Programs would be curtailed or even dropped.

Two area council are among those lobbying against budget cuts. St. Anthony Park Community Council and Como Park Community Council have launched campaigns to preserve their funding. Councils are pointing out that even a 14 percent cut to all of their budgets would only save the city \$109,000, one half of one percent of the total deficit. All of the councils combined get less than \$800,000 per year.

The SAPCC letter stated, "At a time when city services are being cut to the bone, district councils are needed more than ever to respond to the needs of neighborhoods on a grassroots level. As we see police, fire parks and libraries

diminishing in their capacity to serve the people of Saint Paul, the ability of residents to actively engage in solving neighborhood quality of life issues becomes paramount."

Como Park's letter noted that city funding of the councils hasn't kept up with inflation. "With a funding reduction of almost 10 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars since 2005, we function on a shoestring that is stretched to the breaking point. Many councils, including ours, have barely enough funding to support even a single position and basic operating expenses."

The fate of Hamline-Midway Branch Library and the South St. Anthony Park, Griggs, Front and Sylvan recreation centers also continue to play out. At a packed community meeting last month, Coleman and Library Director Melanie Huggins indicated that it could be possible to keep the library open for a year while seeking other long-term solutions. These could include seeking operating partners or having a partner use part of the library space for another purpose.

About 100 library supporters turned out to meet with the mayor and Huggins. Some were skeptical that the solutions proposed would keep the library open and said they would look for other ideas.

As for recreation centers, Parks and Recreation could find partners to keep buildings open or close them entirely. South St. Anthony faces reduced services. Another community facility, the Ben Doran Law Enforcement Center, a storefront police station, closed late last month.

St. Paul's latest round on 2009 budget cuts was April 8, as City Council members voted to lay off six Department of Safety

and Inspections (DSI) employees and make a number of other changes in that department.

The vote was delayed from April 1 as Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune said he had heard from employees that there could be mandatory time off on top of the reduced hours for building trades inspectors, who do specific inspections for construction projects. "I'd just like to know if they are being asked to make more cuts on top of what we're seeing," said Thune.

Other council members initially balked at the layover, saying delays could cost the city more in the long run. They debated Thune's request and its financial impacts at length. Looming cuts to Local Government Aid (LGA), inflation and other factors mean that the

DSI Director Bob Kessler said making the cuts and reaching agreement with bargaining units has been a "very painful process." Employees who are losing their jobs or cutting hours are trying to plan for the future, and a delay would affect that. The delay could mean the city lose about \$50,000 in savings if the council doesn't act soon.

It was finally agreed on just a one-week layover, which would allow the city to still get the layoffs notices out this month. The St. Paul Building Trades Council has agreed to the cuts.

In late March Coleman announced the DSI cuts as well as unspecified staff cuts in the mayor's office. He has reduced salaries in the mayor's office, including his own, by 5 percent, and has frozen salaries of department directors.

In a letter to city employees, Coleman said he would "continue to be responsive to the likelihood of reduced Local Government

Aid." But further cuts to 2009 city spending aren't anticipated until later this spring, as Coleman waits to see what the 2009 Minnesota Legislature does to Local Government Aid (LGA). LGA and property tax revenues make up most of the city's general fund budget.

"I will continue to prepare for additional reductions that will need to be made to our current budget," Coleman said. "The timing of any action will be determined in the coming weeks based on what the final fate is for Local Government Aid."

DSI is the city department most directly affected by the economic downturn and thus has a financial situation that needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. DSI gets very city general fund dollars for its budget, instead relying on the fees it collects for permits, licenses and other services. Because past city administrations held those charges flat for many years, the costs of delivering service didn't keep up. A study has indicated that the city needs to increase many of its fees but outcry from the business community and resistance from the City Council has kept that from happening.

Last year the council had to use general fund dollars when DSI revenues were lower than anticipated. The intent of acting now to make changes is to try to prevent that from happening again.

The job cuts are just part of a restructuring of DSI. One key change moves the city's historic preservation function back to the Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED).

Six employees in the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) would be laid off. These are building trades inspectors, who specialize in specific types of construction-related work.

A seventh position would be eliminated without filling a vacancy, and another employee is taking early retirement. An additional 36 building trades inspectors would have their hours cut from 40 to 32 hours per week, which in turn would save another seven jobs.

The shift of heritage preservation eliminates another 1.8 positions. DSI would add two positions with the financial management changes the department is making. DSI will also reduce its number of divisions and make clerical and financial management reductions. These shifts and changes result in a net loss of 15.2 full-time equivalent positions from the department.


The 2009 adopted DSI budget reduced the revenue expectations by 25 percent, based upon the previous year's experience. Early indications this year are that revenues haven't stabilized, so the pending budget amendment represents a 7 percent decrease in DSI's 2009 budgeted revenues.

Building permits and plan review revenues began to decline in early 2008, said Scott Cordes of the city's financial services office. The city had anticipated bringing in \$1.072 million in plan review revenues. But only \$85,848 came in during January and February. Permit revenues were budgeted at \$6.25 million, but that number was \$586,334 in January and February.

Council members asked if the cuts will affect other types of inspections, such as those for building certificates of occupancy, vacant buildings and problem properties. The city is facing a record number of vacant buildings due to the mortgage foreclosure crisis and families losing their jobs. Kessler said those inspections would not be affected.

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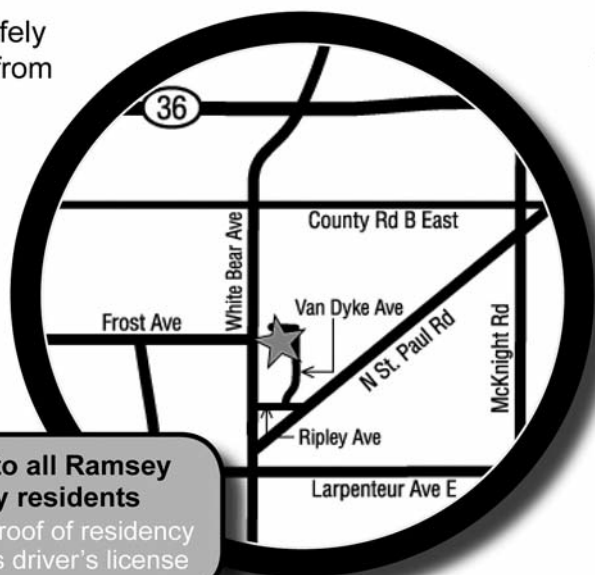
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Rice Street Clinic establishes legacy of keeping community healthy



Dr. Thomas L. Kleven talks with Shurlee Swaim and Betty Paulus about the Rice Street Clinic. Swaim and Paulus have both been long-standing patients, with Swaim seeing doctors there going back to 1958 when she was pregnant with her oldest son. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

By JAN WILLMS

Shurlee Swaim of Roseville remembers when she was a patient at the Rice Street Clinic during the pregnancy of her oldest son in 1958. Now, over 50 years later, she continues to get her

medical care through the clinic, which has been in operation since 1924 when founded by Dr. Lewis Bouma.

Located for the past five years at 980 Rice Street and under the auspices of HealthEast since 1994,

the clinic first opened its doors at 891 Rice Street, over the Belgea Liquor Store. In 1953, the clinic moved to 1006 Rice Street and was operated by Metro Family Physicians.

Its continued presence on

Rice Street has made the clinic a source of pride both to the physicians and staff who operate it, and the patients who consider it their primary source for medical care.

The state-of-the-art building has 21 exam rooms, two proce-

dures rooms and an x-ray clinic. There are seven family practice physicians on staff, a nurse practitioner and a physician's assistant.

Diabetes education is offered there, and an online personal health care record, iHealth, is available.

"We treat patients of all ages and offer complete medical care," said Dr. Sarah Hammes, the medical director of the clinic.

Hammes is a family practice physician who helps deliver babies and cares for newborns. But her oldest patient is 102.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin medical school, Hammes did her residency at United Family Medicine in St. Paul. She first started at the HealthEast Rice Street Clinic when it opened at its new location five years ago.

"Many of us like to practice medicine here," Hammes said. "It has a small-town feel to it. We feel like we're seeing a group of people, a neighborhood. People have a commitment to the community."

Hammes said the clinic serves people with a variety of economic and ethnic backgrounds.

"HealthEast has really made a commitment to the community," she added. "Part of our mission is to serve communities in the east metro area. We wanted a healing environment, and we try to bring in as much to our clinic as we can."

She said the clinic has also had a social worker for about a year.

"Two to three years ago, our patients started losing jobs and losing insurance," she noted. "We are not trained in working with that, and we went to Health East as a clinic and expressed a need for a social worker's presence."

Hammes said it was the right thing to do to serve their patients.

"The social worker is good at helping teen moms, helps with things like car seats and provides a mental health resource," she said. "We identify our patients' needs and provide for their care. It's a great place to work, with a real sense of home—we're welcoming people into our home."

Dr. Charlene Ulstad, another family physician, started at the clinic in 1993. She shares Dr. Hammes' view of the clinic as providing a small-town atmosphere.

"I grew up on a farm in rural Minnesota and always intended to go back and practice in a rural community," Ulstad said. "I always enjoyed working with different generations. I ended up on Rice Street instead."

Ulstad said she has some families as patients, where she takes care of four to five generations.

"This is amazing to me," she stated. "It becomes a little community in the middle of a big city. We serve all walks of life and take all comers. That's the beauty of the place."

Although Cheryl McNerny has worked as the clinic manager for only a year and a half, she has spent over 20 years involved with it. She did provider contracting for a number of years, and recently found a letter she had written to the clinic in 1987.

"It has always held a special warm place in my heart," she said. "If I had to pick a career and a place to be, it would be here."

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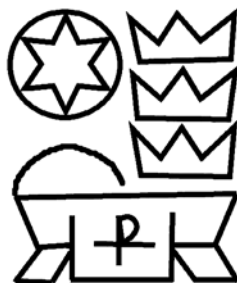
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North End residents bemoan lack of police presence

By JAN WILLMS

The Ben Doran Law Enforcement Center at Rice Street and Rose is now closed, a victim of city budget cuts. But does it really matter?

According to Linda Jungwirth, a member of the Tri-Area Block Club, people have long been asking the question "Is anyone there?"

"We figured it's used for storing police reserve cars and where they keep the orange traffic cones," she said. "It's not the place to go to find a cop."

"The building housed some offices for administration and permitting," said Lee Helgen, District 6 city council member. He said he does not believe its closure will impact the people on the streets that much.

What does matter to the residents of the Rice Street and North End areas is the lack of a centralized police station in their area, similar to the one on Rice and Arlington that closed several years ago.

the Ben Doran Center was supposed to have rent paid by the Sheriff's Department and the City.

"The sheriff didn't come through with his part of it," Helgen stated. He said the annual rent of \$24,000 is being raised to \$30,000.

He said the city had to ask itself if it was worth \$30,000 to keep that space going.

According to County Commissioner Janice Rettman, a contract was never sent to Ramsey County to pay for anything.

"It never came to the county board," she said. "I checked with the financial director, Julie Kleinschmidt."

"The neighborhood has always wanted a real live police station," Rettman said, "but with budget constraints not much is happening."

She said that although the county is not a funder of the police department, she has nothing but high praise for the commander and beat cops.



The Ben Doran Law Enforcement Center was closed last month, a victim of budget cuts, but North End residents ultimately ask about whether North Enders will ever see the return of a centralized police station in their neighborhood. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

"The neighborhood has always wanted a real live police station, but with budget constraints not much is happening."

- Ramsey County Commissioner Janice Rettman

"The Ben Doran Center didn't give us a police presence," Jungwirth said. "The old station gave us one. We got to know the cops, and they knew us as part of the neighborhood. That was more important to the community. I don't think the Ben Doran Center has played as large a role."

"This is not to diminish what it was meant to be," Jungwirth continued.

A Land Use Task Force of the District 6 Planning Council determined in February that the community benefits of the center were limited and that it never served as an adequate substitute for the functionality and community presence of a fully equipped and staffed police district station.

The Ben Doran Center opened in 2005, when the Central District station at Rice and Arlington was closed. The center was named in honor of a young man who was beaten to death by strangers in 2003. When the city built the new police headquarters at 367 Grove St., Central was moved to that location.

The Ben Doran Law Enforcement Center was meant to be an interim step, before a promised new team headquarters would be built in the area. But with the current budget restrictions, when and if that new headquarters will appear is in question.

Helgen said the privately owned building which housed

"They have really been working Rice Street a lot," she said. "They are in the neighborhood and have made a true commitment, working with the North End Business Association. They are very involved, and the gang unit has been just super."

Still, the Ben Doran Center has not been a very good substitute for the original station at Rice and Arlington, nor has police headquarters, according to Jungwirth.

"If you need to go down to Central, you can't get in," she said. "Police headquarters are not user friendly like Rice and Arlington was. We still have patrols, but before people would see a lot of squad cars coming and going. Now we don't see extra cars, and we don't have that accessibility."

Helgen said he has been a long-time supporter of getting a Central police team building.

"That will be on hold for awhile, but we will come back and revisit that possibility," he said.

"We didn't always have a police station, but there has been one here for most of my adult life," Jungwirth said. She said that now, the police headquarters are not part of the neighborhood anymore.

She said people have not given up on having a police station built in the area.

"Whether it will ever happen, I don't know," she said.

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In Our Community

'Shoes' topic of May luncheon

"Shoes! The Importance of Buying, Maintaining, Repairs and Orthopedics," will be the topic at a luncheon for seniors on May 12 beginning at 11:30 at 1415 Englewood Avenue (lower level, Hamline Methodist Church). Gene from Hartland Shoe Repair on Hamline Avenue will share his knowledge from many years in the trade. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations or request free transportation. A free will donation is asked for the meal. If you are a senior, caregiver or neighbor and would like information about our services or volunteer opportunities, visit www.blocknurse.org

Wine, Women & Gardening April 30

Wine, Women & Gardening - April 30 - 7 p.m. at St. Columba Auditorium, 1330 Blair Avenue. Guest speaker Bobby Jensen of Kare 11 "Grow with Kare" Wine and cheese, door prizes. Reservations by April 25th - 651-645-9179. Sponsored by St. Columba CCW.

Vikings Toastmasters Meetings

Vikings Toastmasters normally meet at the Arlington High School (Nebraska and Rice) every Wednesday at 7 pm. During the summer, June through August, Vikings Toastmasters will be meeting on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, at the Rice Street Library, 1011 Rice St., from 7 p.m. to 8:30 pm.

Sunday Forum schedules first meeting April 19

The Sunday Forum is a gathering of citizens and friends of the Midway neighborhood on the third Sunday of each month, for the purpose of exploring and discussing ideas and issues that impact on the social, spiritual and intellectual fabric of our community.

At The Sunday Forum's inaugural meeting is April 19 at 11 a.m. in the Parlor of Hamline United Methodist Church. The topic for analysis and discussion is "Hancock Magnet School-Hamline University Collaborative Program: Should it be expanded?"

Leaders for the discussion are David Hudson (HU) moderator, Craig Anderson (Hancock Elementary Magnet School), Megan Anderson (HU), Brian Hoffman, (HU) and several HU students. Other topics and issues, suggested by our neighbors for future meetings in May, June and beyond, include "Birth of the Church—Is it relevant to us in the 21st century?", "The Hamline-Midway Library—What are the next steps?", "Music in the Midway—What is happening and what are the possibilities?", "Tough times—How do we do with less but get more out of it?" We look to the community for other topics.

The Sunday Forum welcomes all residents and friends of the Midway community who are interested in stimulating discussions about issues that impact directly on the social, spiritual and intellectual life of our neighborhood.

Lynghlomsten Auxiliary's Spring Rummage Sale

Spring has sprung... and so have great bargains! Visit us in the Newman-Benson Chapel at Lynghlomsten (1415 Almond Avenue) for bargains on household items, clothing, furniture, and more! Wed., April 22: 9 a.m. - 7 p.m., Thur., April 23: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., and Fri., April 24: 9 a.m. - Noon (\$3 Bag Day). Call 651-646-2941 for more information.

Donations of new and gently used items accepted April 13-18; drop off between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. at Lynghlomsten. Sorry, we cannot take electronics (TVs, VCRs, computers, microwaves).

Spring Fling at Hamline Church April 25

The SPRING FLING at Hamline Church is Saturday, April 25, 10 - 2 p.m. There will be a Silent Auction with antiques, tickets, art work, collectibles, gift baskets; Bake Sale: cookies, cakes, pies, breads, bars and other treats; Craft Sale: hand-made items for your home or for gifts; Lunch: will be available.

The Hamline United Methodist Women are sponsoring this event with proceeds for Church and UMW mission projects.

Feast, Friends & Art May 1 at HM Elders

Third annual "Feast, Friends & Fabulous Art," a lasagna dinner and art sale to benefit Hamline Midway Elders will take place on Friday, May 1st at 1514 Englewood Avenue (Hamline Methodist Church). The art sale

will run from 9 a.m. - 8 p.m. and the dinner from 4 p.m. - 8 p.m.. New and gently used art may be donated. (Items requested include paintings, photos, sculpture, woodwork, metal, jewelry, beading, mosaics, ceramics, pottery and works by children and seniors. Artists will be able to have their promotional literature on display. Please call the HM Elders office 651-209-6542 to arrange a pick up for art or to request early bird price for tickets (adults \$7, \$8 at the door, \$4 children 10 and under).

Como Park Funtastic Carnival May 21

The Como Park Elementary Funtastic Carnival is scheduled for Thursday, May 21st from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at 780 West Wheelock Parkway. We will have a raffle, games, bingo, face painting, crazy hair, inflatable castles and crafts. There are good meal deals! Please come join us for a night of good food and fun activities with your family.

La Leche League discusses breastfeeding May 12

The Advantages of Breastfeeding is the topic of the next meeting of Como-Midway La Leche League, to be held on Tuesday, May 12 at 7:00 p.m.

Mothers-to-be, mothers, babies and toddlers are invited to attend. La Leche League meetings offer breastfeeding information and support through mother-to-mother helping.

A lending library on a wide variety of related topics is also available. For meeting location or more information, call Heidi at 651-659-9527.

MMSA holds Dinner & Auction April 25

MMSA School is holding its annual Dinner & Auction and all members of the community are invited to attend. The event, Faith in Every Child will be held Saturday, April 25, 5:30 p.m. - midnight. Tickets are only sold in advance and cost \$35, which includes a catered dinner from Cossetta's Italian Market. A wonderful selection of items is available in both the silent and live auctions. Raffle tickets are available for \$2 for a chance at \$1500 cash or a half-year's tuition. There is still time to donate an item or to contribute monetary funds to assist with underwriting. To make a donation or to purchase tickets, please contact the school today at 651-489-1459.

St. Paul Rotary holds Forum

The St. Paul Sunrise Rotary Club is holding its Fourth Annual Community Forum on Thursday, April 23, 7:15-9:00 a.m. at the Town and Country Club, 300 Mississippi River Blvd. The topic will be "Economic Outlook in These Turbulent Times," presented by Toby Madden, Regional Economist for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Cost is \$20; registration deadline is April 16. www.stpaulsunriserotary.org

Saturday Clubs at Hamline Library

Last two Saturday Clubs of the school year for school-age kids will be held on Sat April 25th, 1-3 p.m. and Sat, May 9th, 1-3 p.m. at the Hamline Midway Library. Saturday, April 25th will be Game Day. Kids can come play new games and old favorites, or bring their own to share. On Saturday, May 9th kids can come make something special for their mom or special someone. Saturday Club will be offered again in the fall. If you're interested in volunteering at the Saturday Club, please contact Laurel Rahman at laurel.rahman@ci.stpaul.mn.us or 651-642-0293.

Beep Ball at Midway Stadium

See an exhibition of "Beep Ball," or Baseball for the Blind, at Midway Stadium on Thursday, May 7 at 6:15 p.m. before the St. Paul Saints exhibition game at 7 p.m. The St. Paul Midway Fight Lions team will be playing a group of blindfolded sighted players including School Board candidate John Krenik, a representative from Open Cities Health in St. Paul and business celebrities from TCF Bank on Lexington and Von Hanson's Meats who are donating to play.

This is the sixth year for the popular game at Midway Stadium and donations will go to Vision Loss Resources which serves the 10-county area.

Stacy Shablott is the Community Center, Director of Vision Loss Resources, and she will speak on their services, activities and rehab programs at a meeting of the Midway Lions on Monday, April 27th at O'Gara's at 11:45 a.m.. You can contact Stacy to make a donation at 612-871-2225.

YMCA Camps hold sale May 13

YMCA Camps Widjiwagan and du Nord hold their annual

Spring Garage Sale at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds Merchandise Mart building (off Snelling Ave.) from Wednesday, May 13 to Saturday, May 16. Free admission from 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday; and 9 a.m. to noon for the Saturday Bag Sale. Hundreds of families contribute good quality clothing, household items, baby equipment, toys, books, collectibles, furniture, outdoor equipment, etc. All proceeds go to the camps.

For more information, call 651-645-6605.

Storytimes at Hamline Library

Regular storytimes are offered every week. Storytimes are a wonderful way for children to experience the joys of reading. Bedtime storytime is every Tuesday at 7 p.m. Toddler and Preschool storytime is every Friday at 10:30 a.m. Beginning in June, Bedtime storytime will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Volunteer opportunities at the library

If you are interested in any of the opportunities described below, please contact Laurel Rahman, Volunteer Coordinator, at laurel.rahman@ci.stpaul.mn.us or 651-642-0293.

Bethlehem Church Rummage Sale

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 436 North Roy St., will be holding its Spring Rummage Sale on Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event will be chockfull of events, including a bake sale, lunch, baking and eating nuts.

Saturday Club library volunteers

The Saturday Club is looking for volunteers for Fall 2009 who are interested in working with kids and helping to organize activities on an occasional basis at Hamline Midway Library. The Saturday Club is a place where school-age kids can meet at the library and participate in different activities each month.

Hamline Midway Library is located at 1558 W Minnehaha Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55104 and can be contacted at 651-642-0293. Library events are free and open to the public.

Clinic

Continued from page 8

Ulstad said the clinic has always been a very stable place. "Physicians don't generally leave this clinic except to retire," she said. "We plant here. Now, I'm at the top of the seniority list. My God, I'm old," she said with a smile.

Betty Paulus said her husband was a patient at the clinic before she was. She started coming to the clinic in 2000.

"I was blessed with good health for many years, and I just never went to the doctor before," she explained. "One of the doctors here got on my case and said that I should have a medical checkup. The doctors, nurses and all the staff make this a special place for me. They are so considerate, kind, caring and friendly."

According to Ulstad, many of the patients are related and are all connected.

"We have become more culturally diverse, but I don't think we have lost that connection," she said. "People who grew up using



Betty Paulus says her husband was a patient at the Rice Street Clinic before she started coming in 2000. The Clinic just started offering iHealth, an on-line Personal Health Record, to patients. iHealth allows patients to create, manage and share (with their authorized providers) their personal health information. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

this clinic still drive in from a gazillion miles away. One drives in from Waverly, MN. That is a lot of loyalty to the clinic."

Ulstad said patients explain that they continue to use the clinic because it is where they have al-

ways come.

"I like to think there's a reason they do that," she said. "In this day and age it doesn't happen very often. Somewhere along the way we have done something right."



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Ban is one of the first in the state...

St. Paul City Council moves to ban imitation tobacco products

By JANE MCCLURE

Those chalky little candy cigarettes, chewing gum in containers that look like chewing tobacco and other products will be off of St. Paul store shelves soon. Novelty lighters – shaped like toys or other items – will also be a thing of the past. That's because the St. Paul City Council voted unanimously April 8 to ban the sale of such products. The ban is one of the first of its kind in Minnesota.

"We think youth are sick and tired of tobacco companies targeting us," said Summit-University resident Shanicee Dillon. She became aware of the imitation tobacco products when a two-year-old child she was caring for was able to grab a package of candy cigarettes off of a convenience store shelf.

"At first I thought 'Are you serious'? And then I became angry and appalled." Dillon and other young people said the candy ciga-

rettes and beef jerky and bubble gum in tobacco tin-like packages should not be sold at eye level for even the smallest child to see.

Other speakers objected to the marketing tactics used to sell the products. Central High School junior Calitta Jones held up a package of candy cigarettes, which was very similar in color and design to a package of Marlboros. "Look at the colors of the package, look at the brand name," she said. "Do you think this is a coincidence? I think not."

It's important to make sure the products such as candy cigarettes don't get into the hands of children, said Central High School student Jeremiah Carter. He drew some laughter when added, "To be honest they don't taste very good, either."

More than 120 teens and children packed the council chambers for an April 1 public

hearing to ask that the products be banned. Health and anti-tobacco advocates contend that marketing the imitation tobacco products to children now could encourage them to take up smoking or chewing tobacco later in life. Other countries have banned the sale of the imitation tobacco products, with the encouragement of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The youth group, led by the Ramsey Tobacco Coalition, Boys and Girls Clubs, Summit-Univer-

sity neighborhood-based River of Life Church and other organizations, has waged a high-profile campaign against the products. Young people researching tobacco marketing tactics last fall were surprised to find that candy cigarettes and other imitation tobacco products are sold in many stores. Many wore stickers April 1 stating "The time is now to protect kids."

The current ordinance is sponsored by Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III. He praised the group for their efforts

to educate elected officials about the issue and to get the measure passed.

When the ordinance was introduced last month, some council members admitted that they were surprised to learn that candy cigarettes are still available. Some stores, such as CVS, Holiday Station Stores and Wal-Mart, have banned the sale of such products. But the young people were able to find the products in small, neighborhood convenience stores and in dollar stores. In one dollar store, they found little packages of candy cigarettes bundled together. Some youth wondered if that was meant to be some kind of party favor.

Chris Tholkes of the Association of Nonsmokers-Minnesota also was surprised to find out that candy cigarettes and other imitation tobacco products are still for

"We think youth are sick and tired of tobacco companies targeting us."

- Summit University resident Shanicee Dillon

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



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Rec Center News

Parks and Rec program and registration information

Summer Sport Registration: Sport registration for softball, baseball, t-ball, and nearball will be held at all City of Saint Paul Recreation Centers April 6-10. Non-resident youth who attend school in Saint Paul must show proof of enrollment at time of registration. Late registration may be accepted if space is available. Proof of age (birth certificate) is required at time of registration and will be kept on file for future registrations. Online registration is available at www.stpaul.gov/parks. Registration will also be accepted on site or over the phone with a credit card.

Hancock Recreation Center offers Rec Check, a free after school program for youth in grades 1-6 takes place at Hancock every Mon., Wed., and Fri., from 3:30-6 p.m. on all public school days except early release. Register now at Griggs Recreation Center for crafts and cook-

ing for youth ages 6-12 with a fee of \$1/session.

Studio Stretch for adults is offered at Griggs Recreation Center for 7 weeks with a fee of \$45. Studio Stretch is a total body workout for all fitness levels that moves your muscles with controlled and concentrated effort. Call 651-298-5755 right away to register.

Skateboarding Instruction will begin at Merriam Park on Monday, April 20 for youth ages 7-14. These classes taught by 3rd Lair will give the youth basics of skateboarding and require the youth to wear safety equipment.

Creative Movement begins at Langford Recreation Center on Tuesday, April 21 for ages 2-4. This class is for young movers who are just discovering their motor abilities.

Beginning Bellydance for adults gets underway on Friday, May 1 at Langford Recreation

Center at 6 p.m. You will learn the elements and fundamentals of bellydance while getting an excellent low-impact core body work-out.

To register call the Recreation Center or go on-line at www.stpaul.gov/parks. Griggs 298-5755 Hancock 298-4393 Merriam Park 298-5766 Langford Park 298-5765

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For more information about Saint Paul Parks & Recreation visit www.stpaul.gov/parks

Tobacco ban

Continued from page 12

sale. She admitted that she not only used to buy and eat candy cigarettes as a child, she would even light one once in a while. "It kind of tasted like roasted marshmallows."

Sale of candy cigarettes and other imitation tobacco products desensitizes children to the health risks of tobacco products and promotes use of those products, Tholkes said.

The young people have an ally in their fight against novelty lighters in the St. Paul Fire Department. "They look like toys, so kids are going to play with them," said Fire Marshall Steve Zaccard. He said lighters should be "tools for adults, not toys for children."

Lighters and pictures of lighters displayed by the ordinance advocates showed lighters shaped like footballs, candy bars, vehicles and animals.

In 2008 St. Paul had 22 fires that were started by children. While not all of the fires involved novelty lighters, Zaccard said there is just too much risk in allowing the lighters to be sold here. He cited other cases in other states where injuries have been caused by children playing with novelty lighters.

The ordinance defines novelty lighters as lighters that are designed to appear as toys, or that have "entertaining" audio or visual effects.

Council members praised the group for studying the issues of imitation tobacco products and novelty lighters, and for waging the lobbying effort. Not only did a large group turn out for the council meeting, young people also sent the council letters and emails in support of the ordinance. Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune noted that similar efforts have resulted in other bans, such as the end to a use of cartoon character to sell tobacco products. Thune, the only smoker

on the City Council, led the push to ban smoking in bars and restaurants a few years ago.

But Ward Six Council Member Dan Bostrom surprised the group and his colleagues by saying that the measure doesn't go far enough. He noted that people could still cross the city boundary and buy the products, despite St. Paul prohibitions.

"Just ban the sale of cigarettes in the City of St. Paul, period," Bostrom said. His suggestion drew stunned silence, then applause from the audience. Later group members said that a total tobacco ban isn't their intent and that such a ban wouldn't be effective.

Other council members said the young people should now take their arguments against novelty lighters and imitation tobacco products to state lawmakers. "You should go up to the Legislature next," said Council President Kathy Lantry. "Change is incremental and you start at the local level."

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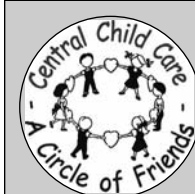
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Key measures added to LRT agreement between City and Met Council

By JANE MCCLURE

If and when the Central Corridor light rail line is built, measures need to be taken to add up to three more transit stations, preserve existing bus service and improve the streetscape along University Avenue. Those key points were added to an amended agreement between the City of St. Paul and Metropolitan Council March 18.

The St. Paul City Council unanimously approved amendments to its municipal consent agreement with Metropolitan Council March 18. The amended agreement now goes back to Metropolitan Council for its approval. Construction on the 11-mile light rail line is to start in 2010, with operations starting in 2014.

Council members Melvin Carter III and Russ Stark, who represent neighborhoods along University Avenue, said they are satisfied that the amendments address issues community residents and business owners have raised over the past several months. They authored most of the amendments, with Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune bringing in additional amendments to address neighborhood concerns about placing the rail line's maintenance facility in Lowertown.

Carter said he is especially pleased that the agreement reinforces the community's desire to have light stations added at Hamline, Victoria and Western. Those stations weren't in the original Metropolitan Council plans and were the focus of an intense lobbying campaign in 2007-2008.

The need to add the stations and preserve bus service has been cast as a social justice issue and one of providing equal economic benefits for neighborhoods along University. Carter also said it's important to preserve transit for residents along the east end of university, many of whom are dependent on the existing bus service. News that bus service could be cut once light rail is up and running in 2014 sparked outrage among community groups last year.

"We need this project done right, not just so we can have some tracks down University Avenue," Carter said. He said Central Corridor needs to serve the entire community and bring opportunities to residents and businesses.

"We didn't get everything we wanted," said Stark. He said there are lingering fears about the potential loss of on-street parking. The light rail project construction will eliminate most of University Avenue's on-street parking. A city-Metropolitan Council parking mitigation plan, which was to be released in early March, still isn't complete.



One of the sore points for businesses is that the Central Corridor budget covers few streetscape improvements, which businesses have waited decades for.

Another sore point for businesses is that the Central Corridor budget covers few streetscape improvements, which businesses have waited decades for. Stark said businesses were frustrated to learn that Metropolitan Council plans didn't even call for new street lights. The plans suggest that the existing lights be removed and replaced after the street is rebuilt.

Among the people filling the City Council chambers March 18 were area residents holding signs asking that their issues not be forgotten "Build light rail for all of us," "Put in the three stops so we can ride the rail" and "Where are the jobs for the people who live in the community?" were among the

slogans displayed. The activists present included former Ward One Council Member Debbie Montgomery, who is active in the lobbying efforts to preserve existing bus service and add the three stations.

After the vote community members said they were happy that the City Council brought their issues forward. "We're pleased with what they've done," said Aurora-St. Anthony neighborhood activist Dennis Pressley. But he and others also said they will take a wait and see attitude.

Debate over the municipal consent agreement changes had

Lovejoy, a transit planner for the City of St. Paul. That action is meant to make sure infrastructure for the stations is installed when the rail line itself is built. It also indicated that if there is any contingency money left over, the first priority is to add one of the stations.

Under the process approved March 18m, the City of St. Paul can recommend which of the three stations will be built first. The amendments also detail the process for when the first station would be built.

"It's conceivable that all three could be built," said Lovejoy. But that won't be known until project construction gets underway. As Central Corridor is being built, there will be steps in the process to make sure contingency dollars are released for the additional uses.

Other key points in the contingency agreement include:

- Metropolitan Council will work with the city and affected business owners to mitigate the loss of on-street parking. The city will take the lead in developing a management plan for on-street parking, such as meters, permit parking or parking time limit enforcement, and will work to create parking improvement districts and off-street parking facilities.
- The Metropolitan Council will provide infrastructure for the three infill stations and work with the city to develop and build at least one station if there is contingency money available.
- The Metropolitan Council will continue to work with the city on plans for bus connections to the project and to optimize bus stop locations to maximize safety and top ensure that there are short walking distances for transferring transit riders.
- The Metropolitan Council will work with the city to retain adequate bus service levels during non-peak, evening and weekend hours while maintaining

acceptable federal cost effective index figures. The council and city agree that changes in bus service in the Western-University area will result in a reduction in transit service availability and that those reductions must be mitigated. A bus sector study of the Central Corridor will be conducted two years before LRT starts operations, to determine the most effective and needed transit service. Additions or improvements to north-south connecting bus service will be made.

- The Metropolitan Council will work with city officials on base streetscape design. There will be an alternate bid package that would include some of the streetscape improvements the city is seeking, such as more attractive train power poles, more streetscape improvements and more greening of the streets along the rail route.
- Public art will be part of each station design and broader public input will be sought on station design.
- The Metropolitan Council will continue its goals of hiring minority and women-owned businesses during construction.
- Metropolitan Council will continue to work with neighborhoods on traction power substation locations. City Council members are concerned about the size and placement of the substations. Ward Five Council Member Lee Helgen has described them as "graffiti boxes."
- The Metropolitan Council will work with the city and business to provide continued access to properties during light rail construction.
- Sidewalks will be at least 10 feet wide unless there are areas where that isn't feasible.
- Impacts of vibrations on Minnesota Public Radio, Central Presbyterian Church and St. Louis Catholic Church will be mitigated.

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EVENT

"Spring Fling" Sale at Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Ave., April 25, 10 - 2 p.m.

Crafts, bakery, silent auction; lunch available. Call 651-645-0667 for more information. 4-09

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"The loss is difficult. It is sad to see something that was such a part of my life closing."

- St. Bernard's Graduate Chris Rider

St. Bernard's

Continued from page 3

She said Catholic Schools Week was always fun, with kids dressing up for Roll Out of Bed Day and Pajama Day.

"When the high school boys went to the state tournament, even the grade kids participated," she said. "There was always such a connection with the high school, and that will really be a difference."

She said her daughters are a little bit scared of the future, having to find a new school with new friends.

"Everyone seems to be going in different directions," she said. "But hopefully they can come back for high school."

Cassidy said the school is doing all it can to help students and teachers prepare for the future. A school fair was recently held, with twenty other Catholic schools answering parents' questions. Teachers are being encouraged to apply for jobs in other Catholic schools, also.

"Our teachers are excellent and amazing and highly skilled," she said.

Cassidy said that some celebrations and commemorations are

tentatively being planned.

"We hope to have a mass May 17 at 10:30 am, open to the public," she said. "The school will be open afterwards, with pictures of classes gone by, and former teachers."

Cassidy said a family mass is planned for June 3, the last day of school, followed by a picnic and carnival.

Cassidy, whose family has for generations attended St. Bernard grade school and high school, said a Benedictine value is hospitality, and she always felt the school was a place where she felt welcome.

"I was able to really get involved and develop skills I didn't know I had," she said.

She said that at a recent senior class lunch, many of the students talked about that same sense of welcome, community and an opportunity to do so many things.

As to the future of Catholic schools, Cassidy said Archbishop John Nienstedt has announced the formation of a task force to start planning the next 12-18 months, looking at reconfiguration.

"I don't know what will happen," she said. "Maybe consolidation, mergers, possibly some closings. I know we will look very different in the next few years."

APRIL AND MAY EVENTS AT HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

Seminars and Lectures

"Complex World, Complex Issues: Operating in a Global Context"

Thursday, April 16

Registration/Reception 3:45-4:15 p.m., Program 4:15-5:45 p.m.

Panel presentation examining Minnesota business in a global marketplace, sponsored by the School of Business and the School of Education

Speaker: Minnesota's state economist Tom Stinson and panel of experts

Location: Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room, 1531 Taylor Ave.

Cost: \$10

Contact: 651-523-2284

"Superposition, Entanglement, and Raising Schroedinger's Cat"

Friday, May 1

Registration/Reception 3:45-4:15 p.m., Program 4:15-5:45 p.m.

The 18th Annual Kay Malmstrom Lecture in Physics
Speaker: Dr. David Wineland, National Institute of Standards and Technology

Location: Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

Cost: Free

Contact: 651-523-2426

Spring Concerts and Theater Performances

University Women's Chorale Concert

Saturday, May 2, 2 p.m.

Kathy Thomsen, director, Janet Greene, director, and Hamline Winds

Location: Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

A Cappella Choir Concert

Sunday, May 3, 4 p.m.

George Chu, director

Location: Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Combo Concert

Thursday, May 7 and Friday, May 8, from 7-8 p.m.

John M. Koziol Jr., director

Location: Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

Hamline Orchestra Concert

Sunday, May 10, 4 p.m.

Yali You, director

Location: Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

Faculty Recital

Tuesday, May 12, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Ginna Watson, violin;

Donald Livingston, fortepiano

Location: Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

Theater and Film Festival

Thursday, May 7 - Saturday May 9
Times and locations vary

A student-created festival presented by Alpha Psi Omega

Dance Ensemble Presents "Confluence"

Thursday, May 14 - Saturday, May 16
7:30 p.m.

Under the artistic direction of Kaori Kenmotsu

Location: Anne Simley Theatre, 1530 Taylor Ave.

Cost: \$2-\$7

Euripides' Trojan Women

Friday, April 24, Saturday, April 25,
Thursday, April 30, Friday, May 1
and Saturday, May 2
7:30 p.m.

One of Euripides' most influential pieces, depicting the other side of war, directed by Carolyn Levy

Location: Anne Simley Theater, 1530 Taylor Ave.

Cost: \$5-\$7



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All recitals and concerts are free and open to the public; for more information, call 651-523-2296. For more information on theater performances, contact the Hamline Theater Box Office at 651-523-2905.