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Heated debate over RS Eden leaves Como neighbors evaluating next steps

By JAN WILLMS

As political battles raged nation-wide this past month, the Como Park neighborhood had its own heated battle, with neighbor pitted against neighbor as RS Eden raised the possibility of redeveloping Sholom Home, 1554 Midway Parkway, into supportive housing for clients recovering from chemical dependency.

In the same way that people across the state expressed dismay at the negative political advertising that flourished throughout the campaigns, many Como Park residents were left feeling disillusioned and disheartened at the intensity of fearful information that was quickly disseminated about RS Eden and its intentions.

While some of the information was factual, some of it, in the forms of flyers, postcards and a website, used scare tactics to oppose RS Eden's reuse of the Sholom Home. The development would bring in intoxicated drifters who would end up sleeping on nearby benches, as suggested by one website. And much



The fallout from the RS Eden interest in the Sholom Home property at 1554 Midway Parkway and its aftermath led Luke Kuhl, chair of the Land Use Committee of District 10, to resign his position in frustration. Above, Kuhl poses in front of the Sholom Home building. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

of the strongly worded opposition was dispensed anonymously. Before any formal proposal for affordable housing could be entertained, RS Eden withdrew its interest in the site.

The fallout from the controversial development and its aftermath led Luke Kuhl, chair of the

Land Use Committee of District 10, to resign his position in frustration.

"I don't think the situation was so much troubling as it was a challenge," Kuhl said.

He explained that businesses do not have to come to District 10 with their projects, but Kuhl's

goal as Land Use chair had been to get a business in the door as early as possible regarding any developments being considered.

"That is how you get the most input," Kuhl said.

That methodology backfired, of sorts, however, when some community members accused District 10 and Kuhl of not sharing information with neighbors from the very beginning.

Kuhl said that RS Eden, a nonprofit agency that facilitates positive change in the areas of chemical dependency, family services, corrections and affordable housing came in early to discuss the possibility of using the site at 1554 Midway Parkway as a supportive housing facility.

Sholom currently houses a few residents, who will be moved to 7th and Otto Streets between February and March of next year.

"They came in so early they didn't want a community meeting yet," Kuhl said. "They did a lot of things voluntarily. They did not want a purchase agreement before a community meeting had been held."

Kuhl said the choice between getting information out as soon as possible or distributing information to people who don't understand the process is very problematic.

Community forum held on RS Eden debate

By JAN WILLMS

In an attempt to move forward and heal any remaining wounds, a community forum was held Oct. 23 for the Como Park Neighborhood to gather and discuss the future of the Sholom Home redevelopment.

Recent weeks had found frightening information being dispersed about the possibility of Sholom being purchased by RS Eden, a nonprofit that wanted to have a community conversation about potentially using the site for supportive housing.

In response to some of the fear-mongering flyers, other residents attempted to provide factual information regarding the proposed reuse of Sholom. Some of the resulting discussion was rendering the neighborhood apart. After RS Eden withdrew its request, the forum, sponsored by District 10 and with more than 80 in attendance, offered an opportunity for further consideration of the Sholom Home's future.

Rep. Alice Hausman told the audience that in the past few weeks, they had weathered a storm, and there was now an opportunity for them to come together and to heal.

"If I can play a role, I'm willing," she said.

David Arbeit, District 10 Community Council chair, said the community was looking at the Sholom site with fresh eyes toward the future. He said an ad hoc community task force has been formed to look at options for Sholom and clarify the processes.

He said an incredible turnout of 126 attended the district council meeting, where six new members were elected to the board.

Sholom Home, located at 1554 Midway Parkway, according to Mary Montagne and Dolores Rufenacht, currently houses over 100 residents, who will be moving out in February.

"They're hoping to sell it before then," said Montagne. "The structure and the plumbing need work, there's an old elevator and small rooms. The kitchen has an old dishwasher that breaks down weekly."

Rufenacht said the building has a boiler system with three boilers, one of them dating back to 1929. All are wrapped in asbestos.

"None of the bathroom doorways are wheelchair accessible," she said. "They are now using community bathrooms. The heating and cooling

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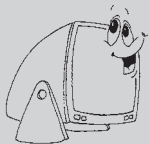
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Monitor in a Minute

City Council amends city regulations for 24-hour fitness clubs

Proposed city regulations for 24-hour fitness clubs keep getting a workout. After adopting the regulations October 8, the St. Paul City Council recalled and amended the rules October 15. The vote to amend the rules was 5-2, with council members Dan Bostrom, Melvin Carter II, Lee Helgen, Kathy Lantry and Dave Thune for, and Pat Harris and Russ Stark against. The final amended version was adopted October 22.

At least one fitness franchise is eyeing an area site, in the new Winnepeg development on Rice Street.

The amendments, brought forward by Ward Six Council Member Dan Bostrom, put additional requirements on the club's design. The added regulations call for clubs to only have one office area, in which all interior walls are made up of at least 50 percent clear glass. The office door will be made up of at least 90 percent glass. No window treatments or other glass treatments shall be installed to obstruct the view into the office. The door to the office is to be locked unless an employee is inside.

Bostrom and Thune are concerned that the fitness clubs could be all too easily converted into fronts for prostitution. For years the city battled such bogus "health clubs," finally using a state statute on nuisance properties to shutter many of the clubs in the 1990s. Concerns about a re-emergence of storefront prostitution stalled the City Council's approval of an ordinance allowing the popular, no-frills 24-hour fitness clubs to operate here. That's because the city had had a regulation on its books requiring that the health and fitness clubs be staffed 24 hours. The regulation was passed years ago to deter

illicit activities. The new regulations allow the clubs to be open 24 hours without staff, but have many conditions on video surveillance, patron access, exterior windows and equipment to use in case of emergency.

Bostrom said the added regulations are needed to prevent illegal activities. While saying he has no problems with franchises like Anytime Fitness or Snap Fitness, Bostrom is concerned that future club operators could try to run illegal businesses and that providing an enclosed office space with 24-hour public access is too risky.

Harris and Stark disagreed, saying the additional regulations are too onerous.

No one from the clubs was able to comment on the changed regulations October 15 as the public hearing on changes was held in September.

Work on Lexington Commons continues

Work to develop Lexington Commons continues. Developer CommonBond Communities is applying for Metropolitan Council and state funding for a pollution investigation and cleanup grant. The St. Paul City Council approved the grant application October 22, along with grant applications for four other sites.

Lexington Commons is a proposal to convert the former Lexington Nursing Home into supportive housing units, which CommonBond would own and operate. The housing would be for people making the transition from homelessness and would include support services and on-site property management.

The project would also include construction of a new headquarters for the non-profit housing development agency, which is currently located downtown.

Site contamination is being scrutinized. The project has been controversial as it is adjacent to a

small pocket of homes on Central Avenue just west of Lexington.

Some neighbors oppose the project and accuse CommonBond of trying to buy up homes and break up the neighborhood. CommonBond already owns a former chiropractic clinic and a vacant home, and has reportedly made offers on other homes.

Others are concerned about the conversion of the property for housing and have a number of questions about the type of neighbors they will have. There are also concerns about the traffic and parking impacts of the project.

Union Park District Council and Lexington-Hamline Community Council are holding a series of meetings with neighbors to discuss the project. The most recent community meeting was held October 20.

Businesses penalized for code violations

Two area establishments were penalized November 5 for food code violations. The St. Paul City Council handed down the fines to Taher, Inc., doing business as Hubbard Broadcasting, 3415 University Av., and to the Oasis Market at Marshall and Cleveland for the violations.

The Merriam Park Oasis Market had its restaurant food and grocery license revoked by the City Council. That is because of two critical food code violations that have not been corrected.

In a May 2008 inspection city staff found critical violations, because the business' paper towel dispenser was empty and the soap dispenser was broken. A notice was sent and a reinspection then took place in July 2008. The same violations were found. State administrative rules for food service require food service employees to keep their hands and exposed parts of their arms clean. The rules also explain how employees are to wash their hands.

Because Oasis officials didn't contact the city to request a public hearing or to pay a \$250 fine by August 25, the licenses are suspended.

Taher, Inc. is a food service company that is in many locations, including state office buildings and corporations. At Hubbard Broadcasting Taher holds a restaurant three license, for 13 to 50 seats. An inspection in June 2008 resulted in a citation for two critical violations. The inspection revealed that an ice maker had slime mold/scale buildup inside. That is considered a critical minor violation. It was also found that cold food was not being maintained at 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Instead, the temperature in a food cooler was found to be 61 degrees.

A reinspection took place in July 2008 and the ice maker was still found to have slime mold and scale buildup. The cooler temperature was at 45 degrees for the salad bar and cottage cheese and 48 degrees for cooked chicken. The city inspection report also notes that "There are a lot of items on the report that indicates (sic) sloppy management of the kitchen."

Taher was ordered to pay \$375 for the two violations but failed to do so prior to a September 22 deadline. That is why the City Council had to vote to impose the fine.

Como Park is the beneficiary of two actions November 5 by the St. Paul City Council. The council allocated \$150,000 toward the Como Circulator project, which will provide three buses for the Como Campus to provide transportation to and from the park. City officials hope the new circulator buses will ease traffic and parking congestion at the park.

The funds are coming from a parks supply and maintenance fund. The money will be used along with a federal grant for the project. The grant of \$1.6 million was approved in 2005 for Como.

The council also accepted a Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Open Space development grant for \$637,000 toward the work on the new Como Park Pool (see related story) and \$503,000 for the design and reconstruction of Eastbrook Drive.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Deteriorated present pool won't reopen...

City begins campaign to replace Como Pool

By JANE MCCLURE

Como Park will continue to have a swimming pool, but what that pool will look like and whom it will serve is in the hands of the city-appointed task force and eventually, elected officials. That task force is expected to have its first meeting this month and continue its work into next year.

More than 80 people turned out October 30 to hear St. Paul Parks and Recreation Director Bob Bierscheid outline the planning process for a replacement facility. The Como Pool is so deteriorated it won't be able to reopen for swimmers in 2009.

Como is one of three city-owned swimming pools in St. Paul. The others, Highland, Phalen and the indoor Great River Water Park at Oxford Community Center/Jimmy Lee, have all been refurbished in recent years.

Parks maintenance staff estimate it would cost as much as \$1 million to repair the pool, so the decision was made to close Como for 2009.

How a new pool could take shape is already generating debate, which could pit neighborhood residents concerned about additional traffic and demand on the park against those who want a large new pool. At least one audience member questioned October 30 why the city would rebuild the pool, when there are other public pools.

But Bierscheid said that the pool is an asset that belongs to all of St. Paul and that any planning for its future needs to consider the needs of the entire city.

One phrase that has riled some neighbors is "water park," which has been bandied about in some discussions of the pool. Bierscheid cautioned those at the meeting to not jump to conclusions when that term is used, noting that features such as splash pads and slides can be part of smaller pool facility projects. Highland's pool, for example, has what is believed to be the only climbing wall in a pool in the state.

What will affect the size of the new pool will be its bather load or the number of users it can accommodate at one time. It will also depend on the features chosen and how various uses, from lap swimming to children's play, are accommodated.

There were also citizens at the meeting who spoke for keeping the pool open, saying they will miss it when the 2009 swimming season is here. One man criticized the city for not doing more to keep the facility operating. But the facility's age has made it difficult to keep the pool open. Bierscheid pointed out that maintenance staff spent an inordinate amount of time at the pool last year.

Como Pool was built in 1962 by a private firm, Public Pools, Inc. The company spent \$161,000 building the pool but only operated it for three years before going out of business in 1965. The city then paid \$15,000 and took over the pool.

The process outlined October 30 calls for consultant U.S.

Aquatics to work with Parks and Recreation staff and the task force on plans for a new pool. Bierscheid said the intent is to also develop plans for the various park uses around the pool, including McMurray Fields and the proposed outdoor classroom nearby. Vehicular access patterns in the area would also be studied.

Looking at how a new pool would take shape is important, said Bierscheid, "but you've got to look at the context it's in." That includes considering everything from traffic and parking

needs to preservation of surrounding green space.

The task force's work will include analysis of the site, concept plans and design development. The project's total budget is estimated at \$7.22 million, with about \$5.9 million for the pool itself. Because the pool is in a regional park, part of the costs could be picked up through Metropolitan Parks and Open Space funding. The rest could come from the city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB).

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The Como Pool is so deteriorated it won't be able to reopen for swimmers in 2009.

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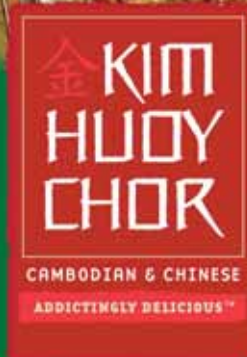
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Council adopts two actions related to Central Corridor LRT

By JANE MCCLURE

One planning process hit a milestone and another got a push ahead October 22 as the St. Paul City Council adopted two actions related to future land use issues along the proposed Central Corridor light rail line.

The council adopted station area plans for the areas around University Avenue intersections with Westgate, Raymond, Fairview, Snelling, Lexington, Dale and Rice. These plans outline a number of ideas for new developments within one-quarter mile of each station area, as well as ideas for parks, trails and other public amenities.

The council also adopted interim zoning regulations to limit development around proposed infill station sites at Hamline, Victoria and Western. The same kind of detailed station area planning done for the seven station plans can now proceed for the three infill stations. Those plans are expected to be completed next year and the brought back to the St. Paul Planning Commission and City Council for review and approval.

The proposed light rail line, which is currently being reviewed at the federal level, would start operations in 2014 at the earliest. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for planning and building the rail line itself. The city of St. Paul's responsibility is for land use planning. The city is trying to anticipate how the neighborhoods along Central Corridor could change in response to light rail and to be ready for change.

One effect of the infill station interim regulations is that zoning regulations to promote transit-oriented development now extend along most of University Avenue from the Prior-Fairview area all the way to the Marion Street-state capitol area. It establishes the longest zoning overlay district in St. Paul, from the Prior Avenue area (which is near the planned Fairview station) all the way to the area around Marion and the Rice Street station. Only one small area, near University and Fry, would fall outside of a station area. The station areas are each one quarter-mile area centering on station locations themselves. That in turn puts into place zoning re-

strictions on new development features such as building heights and setbacks, density of development, and placement of driveways and off-street parking. New auto-oriented businesses, such as vehicle sales businesses and repair businesses, would be banned.

City planning staff, consultants, community organizations and many volunteers put in countless hours over the last two years working on ideas for transit-oriented development in conjunction with the planned rail line. Last year the City Council adopted the Central Corridor Development Strategy, a document that outlines ideas for future public and private investment along St. Paul's portion of the 11-mile light rail line. Because much of the line is in St. Paul along University Avenue that is where most of the efforts have been focused.

District councils and community development corporations around the Central Corridor have rallied to support the station area plans as well as the notion of infill stations and additional land use planning around the three stations. But a few objections and suggestions continued to be heard, at the Oct. 15 public hearing on the infill station area regulations and on the other seven station area plans.

Two women involved with Aurora-St. Anthony, Gloria Massey and Veronica Burt, asked that the Dale Street station area reflect the area's history as the Rondo neighborhood. Rondo, an African-American enclave, was largely wiped out during the construction of Interstate 94 in the 1960s. They want the station renamed Dale Street/Historic Rondo Station, to tie in with planned historic and cultural initiatives there. That's a change the City Council agreed to.

But the council didn't make station area plan changes sought by Midway Shopping Center representative Paula Maccabee. The shopping center is in the Snelling station area and would fall under heightened redevelopment regulations in that area which are meant to promote more dense, transit-oriented redevelopment.

Maccabee said the city should not adopt land use plans that could be affected by the current economic downturn. "All of us

who read the paper and watch the news on television, know that these are very difficult times," she said.

Maccabee went on to say that the development community is "very worried" about what could play out over the next few years.

One part of the plan suggests that private property owners and developers would be responsible for public infrastructure costs, said Maccabee. She questioned whether developers should have to pick up the tab for public amenities such as park space. A number of specifications would also be put on developers wanting to build streets or sidewalks. Asking developers to bear many costs "is going to make it too hard to develop these properties," she said.

Council members Russ Stark and Melvin Carter III asked to lay over the vote on the station area plans October 15 so they could look at the issues Maccabee raised. But Stark noted the following week that many of the concerns had been raised during the Planning Commission review of station area plans and that the City Attorney's Office had reviewed them as well.

"I'm pretty comfortable with the language we have," said Stark. Carter agreed and the station area plans were adopted with only minor language changes.

Adoption of the station area plans and the interim regulations around infill stations is now being followed by a proposal to seek pollution investigation and cleanup funding along Central Corridor. In October district councils along Central Corridor began reviewing a proposed funding request that targets cleanup of polluted sites along the proposed light rail line. The city would apply for the fund by mid-November and if successful would use the dollars to test and clean up polluted sites. It's not clear how many polluted sites there are along the proposed rail line or how many of those sites would be slated for eventual redevelopment.

There are older automotive and industrial uses all along University Avenue so it's likely some of those could be targeted with the funding.

District 6 News

District 6 Board meetings moving

District 6 Planning Council Board of Director's Meetings and Land Use Task Force Meetings are moving beginning January 2009 from 1414 North St. Albans to 1021 Marion Street-Rice Street Recreation Center use the middle doors and a ramp is there as well.

The Community Building Meetings are the third Wednesday of the month beginning at 6:30 p.m. at 1021 Marion Street.

Once again cold weather is approaching and District 6 is sponsoring a Sock & Mitten Drive. You can drop off your donations of socks, mittens hats & scarves to our office, 213 Front Avenue or Mikes Complete Auto

Care at 1174 Rice Street until December 15th.

North End/South Como Community Building Plan begins

The Community Building Plan will deal with the gaps in services, what the neighborhoods see as priorities and how to go about getting things done. While Council Member Lee Helgen's office and District 6 Planning Council are the lead on the plan, other community stakeholders such as the North End Business Association and Sparc will play a role, as will you the folks who live here.

In October, 2008, District 6 Planning Council hired Culture-

Brokers LLC to conduct an analysis of the current neighborhood situation, help the council identify and select priorities and tell the story of the neighborhood, asking the questions; where are the gaps and why should investment be in this neighborhood?

District 6 and CultureBrokers LLC will hold a total of eight public meetings over 5 months to provide neighborhood residents and businesses an opportunity to hear more about the process and expectations, look at (and comment on) the challenges and opportunities in the neighborhood, and preview the plan before its launch. Comments are welcome and encouraged!


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In case you aren't familiar with the term, EMR stands for Electronic Medical Record. Most health facilities have converted, or are in the process of converting from paper to electronic charts and record keeping. What does this mean to you and to your health care provider?

I have only used a couple of EMR systems: the one used by my clinic group and the one we use when seeing patients in the hospital. So keep in mind that my experience is somewhat limited. However, because our clinic has been electronic since January of 2006 I have had lots of time to learn what I like, and dislike, about electronic vs. paper records.

Many people think that one computerized organization can access information from any other computerized group. This is not true. Everyone has their own system, and they are not usually compatible with another system. It would be great if you could go to an emergency room in Grand Marais and they could access your clinic records - therefore having accurate information about your current medications and your immunization status. But that's not how the systems work right now.

EMRs are touted as being able to reduce medical errors. Not always true. If a provider is writing out a prescription by hand, they are not very likely to write an incorrect drug name. But "point and click errors" could cause someone to accidentally click on a different drug than they were intending. Point and click errors can also result in the ordering of incorrect labs.

Computers are fast, right? So medical care should become more efficient when a provider uses EMR, right? Again, not always true. If you are being seen in clinic and the computer network shuts down, everything comes to a halt. We are not able to access your previous information, lab results, medication lists, etc. In order to request labs, the provider needs to have a diagno-

Cares and Cures

By JANE KILIAN, M.D.

EMR - the Good, the Bad, and the Reality

sis. And computers don't always "think" the way people do. So sometimes it takes a while to find the computer language for a particular diagnosis. This may take away from the time you actually get to interact with your doctor if s/he is needing to check through a long list in order to find your diagnosis.

Many tasks take more time to manage on a computer than they did in paper. For example, prior to EMR, if a patient had a mammogram, I received a printed copy of the mammogram report. I could read it quickly and then initial it and check a box to indicate to staff what should be done with the report. Now, I view mammogram reports on a tiny screen. So I need to click to enlarge it in order to read it. And then it takes another 6 or 7 clicks to sign off on the report and assign it to another staff person. Much slower for me.

In the "old days", physicians would dictate the details of the office visit and someone else would type it and put the dictation into the paper chart. With EMR, physicians are responsible for entering almost all the information about the visit into the EMR. I am a pretty quick typist, but it often takes between 2-4 hours to finish up patient notes after a busy day in clinic. That is much longer than it used to take to dictate.

So what is good about EMR? I get lab results much sooner, often the same day I see a patient. This is especially helpful if results are critical in terms of patient care. Progress notes are usually available sooner (provided the doc is not behind on typing) so a patient seen on Mon-

day by one doc could be seen on Tuesday by another, and the care plan would already be in the chart.

Within my clinic system, I have access to patient information from any of our clinics. This is very helpful if I am going to see a patient in the hospital whom I have never seen. I can pull up their most recent clinic visit to have a list of their medications and medical conditions.

In addition, if a specific clinician is unavailable, a patient can be seen by a different provider (even at a different clinic location) with a full medical record available to whomever cares for the patient.

With the EMR, I am able to fax my patients' prescriptions to their pharmacy, hopefully eliminating waiting time when they go to pick up their medications. The flip side is that faxes don't always get transmitted so a patient could end up at the pharmacy without a written prescription, and no faxed copy either.

Typing during an office visit (to record the patient history) is cumbersome for some providers. Luckily I can type without looking at the keyboard, so I try to type while looking (and listening) to the patient. But there are days when I feel that I spend more time than I would like fussing with the computer during a patient's visit time. We always seem to be short of time during visits and I resent anything that takes away from my being able to really pay attention to the person I am seeing, as opposed to the instrument I am using.

I don't really know what pa-

tients think about EMR. Many will comment that they are impressed with the ease of filling prescriptions and the technology we have available in the exam rooms (it is nice to Google a topic or visual image to show patients).

I still believe the most important part of a healing relationship with a health care provider is the interpersonal interaction. Technology can help or hinder that relationship, it all depends on how it is used.

A good friend of mine summed it up pretty well: EMR makes some hard things really easy and some easy things really hard. Three years after starting to

use EMR, I would probably have a hard time going back to paper. There are advantages and disadvantages to both systems.

I welcome your comments and experiences with EMR systems - both good and bad. How has the electronic medical world affected your health care?

Lastly, remember to get a flu shot. Now is the perfect time to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Have fun. Stay happy and healthy.

(Dr. Kilian is a family practice physician who lives and works in the Midway Como community. She believes that good medicine means caring for people as well as curing diseases. We want to address your health concerns so please let us know what topics you would like to see in future columns. If you have suggestions or questions, write to the Monitor c/o 1885 University Avenue West, #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Or e-mail denisw@aplacetoremember.com.)

Como Parks Boys' Soccer concludes season



The Como Park Boys' Soccer team recently concluded an amazing season with an overall record of 18 wins and 3 losses, and a 2nd place trophy for Section 4A after a deep play-off run toward the State Tournament. In the Section Championship game held at Como on Thursday, Oct. 16, the Cougars and Mounds Park Academy battled through regulation time and 2 overtime periods and were still tied 0-0, which forced the match to be decided by a penalty kick shootout.

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Jonathan Sage-Martinson hired to unlock potential of Central Corridor

By JAN WILLMS

A familiar face has joined a group of nonprofits to help the neighborhood benefit from the Central Corridor.

Jonathan Sage-Martinson was named in June to serve as the coordinator for the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative and Learning Network. The title is a mouthful, but the goal of the organization is simple—working to unlock the transformative potential of the Central Corridor.

This collaboration of foundations, local and national, is interested in the community impact that the Central Corridor Light Rail will present.

Sage-Martinson seems well suited for this role. He has spent the past 10 years working with community-based nonprofit development groups.

The last 6 ½ years he served as executive director of SPARC, an agency designed to create and maintain healthy, affordable and sustainable neighborhoods by improving residential and commercial vitality in the Hamline Midway, South Como and North End neighborhoods of Saint Paul.

"I worked on some of the same issues at SPARC," Sage-Martinson said. "We helped people keep up existing homes in the corridor, and we worked on affordable housing development and small business assistance."

"During my years at SPARC, we knew the advent of light rail in the Corridor would have a profound impact on the community," Sage-Martinson said.

"The Collaborative offers three

things," Sage-Martinson said.

"We are creating a learning network so that the foundations and other customers can learn and make well-informed decisions," he said. Other actors benefiting from this learning process include counties, cities, institutions and nonprofits.

"We are forming working groups that will explore and implement innovative approaches around a number of topics in the corridor," Sage-Martinson added. "And we are creating a catalyst foundation that will seed innovation projects in the Corridor."

Sage-Martinson said the Collaborative hopes to benefit both the public and businesses from investment in the light rail.

Prior to his time at SPARC, he worked for the Green Institute of South Minneapolis.

Sage-Martinson, who said he is "almost" a native of Minnesota, was born in California but has lived in the Metro most of his life. He completed a master's degree in community economic development and nonprofit management from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

"I served on the mayor's Central Corridor Development Strategy Task Force, and SPARC worked with other organizations on preserving residential neighborhoods," Sage-Martinson said. He said he heard about the Collaborative, and that led him to his present job. As coordinator, he is currently the only staff person on board.

He said the Collaborative also

wants to work with a disadvantaged population who might not otherwise benefit from the Light Rail.

"We're very interested in trying to play a productive role, ensuring a thriving small business community after the train is built. We want to help prepare for a robust economy after light rail is here," he said.

Sage-Martinson said the State of Minnesota approved its share of the financing during the last legislative session, which helped unlock federal funding for the project.

"There are a few more steps to go through the next procedure," he said. "Construction is expected to begin in 2010, with the train in operation by 2014."

He said that in July, the Collaborative co-sponsored a forum with the Central Corridor Project Office.

"We brought in experts from TriMet in Portland, OR, and Sound Transit in Seattle," he said. "They spoke to a group of folks about their efforts around construction and business interruption. Together, these two groups built and planned eight light rail transit lines."

He said the presentation gave members of District Councils, small business, the Chamber of Commerce, business associations, the Met Council and foundation committee members the chance to hear about what worked and didn't work in other places.

"Part of the discussion was how to keep business thriving during construction," he said. "How do you schedule the construction



Jonathan Sage-Martinson was named in June to serve as the coordinator for the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative and Learning Network. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

to have the least impact on businesses? How do the businesses prepare themselves?"

"We have a 10-year vision for our collaboration," Sage-Martinson said. "We can help folks capture the benefits of the light rail for individuals who live and work in the Corridor and neighborhoods as well."

He said the key is the long-term vision beyond the construction and in the development of new realty once the light rail is up and running.

"My role in these early months is in a sort of discovery phase," he said. "I have been out talking to folks in the Corridor, finding out what they saw as a challenge and what is timely."

He said that from that information, he hopes to determine what topics to put together for working groups.

"I think the Central Corridor will provide a tremendous chance to bring lots of opportunity for folks in and around light rail, but it comes with some challenges, too," Sage-Martinson admitted. "Certainly some of the concerns I have heard are about what the construction period might mean and its impact on small businesses."

He said there is also concern about what light rail might mean in an increase in rents for nonprofits and development pressure in housing stock and what it might mean for pricing.

"There is a lot of talk about on street parking, and how it can be better designed to serve business and neighborhoods along the Corridor," he said.

He said the concerns and challenges are why he and the Collaborative are working hard.

"I am excited about it," he said. "The best part of the job is learning about all of the efforts underway by nonprofits and other entities working to help folks benefit."

He encouraged anyone who might have ideas, concerns or suggestions to contact him at 651-280-2384 or visit the Collaborative website at www.centralcorridorfunders.org.

Members of the Collaborative are the Annie E. Casey Foundation, F.R. Bigelow Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis Foundation, Otto Bremer Foundation, Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation, Saint Paul Foundation, Surdna Foundation and the Travelers Foundation.

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Four councils OK Rock-Tenn recommendations

By JANE MCCLURE

Plans to tie Rock-Tenn's future fuel needs to a rural anaerobic digestion system have been endorsed by all four area district councils involved in planning for the plant's energy future. Union Park District Council was the last to weigh in, voting November 5. That district includes the Merriam Park and Desnoyer Park neighborhoods directly south of the plant.

Hamline-Midway Coalition, St. Anthony Park and Macalester-Groveland community councils voted in October to support recommendations of the Rock-Tenn Community Advisory Panel (RCAP). The councils had to vote before November 7, to meet a St. Paul City Council deadline. The council will hear a report on the recommendations at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 12.

The City Council will ultimately make its own recommendation on which energy source is best for the Midway paper recycling mill. More details about the preferred energy option would be known sometime in 2009.

The district councils were among a number of groups that spent more than a year discussing energy options for the Midway paper recycling plant, as part of RCAP.

All discussed the issue in September but none took a vote. That is likely to happen in October for three of the four and in November for Union Park. (Union Park includes the councils that cover Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline and Lexington-Hamline neighborhoods.) One idea being discussed by the council's RCAP representatives is having all four votes on the same resolution.

It also seems likely that the councils will be voting on RCAP's recommendations, which have some differences from those recommended by the Port. The RCAP recommendations give qualified support to the Port Authority team's recommendations while adding some caveats about environmental impacts and technical feasibility of the recommendations and restating opposition to use of refuse-derived fuel.

The City Council then will take the district council recommendations, as well as information from the panel and the St. Paul Port Authority and make its own recommendation on which energy source is best for the Midway paper recycling mill. The council will hold a public hearing to discuss the recommendations before weighing in. That most likely will be in late November or December.

If all goes as planned, more details about the preferred energy option would be known sometime in 2009.

More than year ago Rock-Tenn lost its steam power from the old Xcel Energy High Bridge Plant. That plant was decommissioned and replaced this spring.

Since then Rock-Tenn has used a mix of fuel oil and natural gas to power its operations. That has increased operating costs dramatically, said Port Authority Vice President Pete Klein. That led to the search for a more stable, cost-effective energy solution.

The study of energy options was funded with \$4 million from the 2007 Minnesota Legislature. RCAP met 24 times over the past year, producing 200 reports that fill 10 large binders. Studies included solar, wind, various forms of biomass, refuse-derived fuel, anaerobic digestion, conventional combustion and advanced thermal energy.

The district councils postponed action in September to hear input from two RCAP community meetings, September 6 and 15. The meetings were held to review the Port Authority and RCAP recommendations. Each meeting drew about two dozen people, many of them elected officials and RCAP members. No one expressed outright opposition to the Port Authority and RCAP recommendations. Most speakers praised the Port Authority for working to find a solution that doesn't generate additional emissions. Some restated opposition to use of refuse-derived fuel as a fuel source for energy production. A public comment period on the recommendations ended September 19.

Most district council representatives said they believe that reaching an agreement won't be



The councils are weighing recommendations from a St. Paul Port Authority-led team and the Rock-Tenn Community Advisory Panel (RCAP). The panel included district council representatives as well as representatives of labor, the community at large and the Midway Chamber of Commerce.

difficult. He also said the idea of using anaerobic digestion, to produce biogas, is the best way Rock-Tenn can address its long-term energy needs. "I think the pieces are in place to put this proposal together," Macalester-Groveland representative Don Arnosti said.

"I think the recommenda-

tions are a win-win-win for everyone involved," said Hamline-Midway representative Randy Schubring.

Finding a new energy source and keeping Rock-Tenn open preserves the jobs of 475 employees. In those ranks are 375 members of the steelworkers union, along with 15 operating engineers and

12 electricians. The plant recycles about 1,000 tons of paper per day into boxboard and packaging.

The biogas produced under the preferred option would be generated through an anaerobic digestion process, which uses microbes to promote decomposition of a fuel. The fuels eyed for the biogas could be corn byproducts from the production of ethanol, sugar beet waste or animal manure from cattle or poultry. The biogas would be generated in rural Minnesota, at a facility owned by another party.

Various sites and fuels are being studied. The Port could help a facility's owners obtain financing.

Biogas is preferred because it is a clean, renewable energy source. It could be added to the natural gas pipeline system and used to buy down the cost of natural gas for Rock-Tenn through carbon credits.

One benefit of biogas for the host community is that it would provide a way to dispose of types of waste that have been problematic. Also, an end product of biogas production is rich soil, which can be used as a fertilizer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



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New Spirit School's STAR STUDENT

This month we honor,
Steffany Merino



Steffany Merino is a fifth grade student at New Spirit School. She is an excellent student who quietly works hard to do her best all the time. Her 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Barsness, says she is impressed by her consistent hard work. Steffany is usually one of the first people to follow directions and accomplish what needs to be done each day. She is a wise person in the PeaceBuilders program and she demonstrates that by helping students when they are stuck on their work. Steffany is also a good friend to her classmates. She is kind and courteous. Steffany is always helping someone by tutoring them, holding the door for the class or just being their friend.


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Advance Shoring's fate now in the hands of City Council

By JANE MCCLURE

It will be November 26 at the earliest before more is known about the future of Advance Shoring, a longtime North End construction supply company. Whether the company moves from its location at 1400 Jackson St. is in the hands of the St. Paul City Council.

The council held a public hearing Oct. 15 and 22 to weigh debate over the company's site. The month-long delay after the public hearing is a legal requirement.

The issue is a difficult one for the City Council, especially in an economic downturn.

Many workers at Advance Shoring have pleaded for the company to be allowed to stay, during the public hearing process and in calls and written communication with the council. In some families, generations have worked for the company.

But would moving the company elsewhere, and cleaning up the Jackson Street site, be more of a benefit for the city in the long run? The St. Paul Port Authority has asked the City Council to use the power of eminent domain to take the land. Eminent domain is a legal process used to take private land for the public good. It is a process that has been increasingly limited in recent years due to various court actions, but would be possible in this case because the cleanup would cost more than the property is valued at. The property is polluted but the level of pollution and how safe the property is for continued use is just one of many points of debate.

Advance Shoring's owners and workers contend that forcing the company to move could drive it out of business. Workers and supporters packed the two council

hearings to show their support for the company's quest to stay where it is.

Advance Shoring began in 1960 and has been in the North End for about 35 years. The company employs 40 workers, with hourly wages averaging about \$24. The company is in its second generation of family ownership as current owner Karen Haug succeeded her father. The company has been involved in many major construction projects in St. Paul for almost 50 years, including Xcel Energy Center, the Science Museum of Minnesota and hospital and business expansion projects.

Haug said the employees of Advance Shoring are committed to fighting the proposed taking of their land. She added that the company is not interested in moving.

"This is not about the money," she said in emotional testimony before the City Council. "This is about protecting a St. Paul business."

The Institute of Justice has already come on board to help Advance Shoring fight the eminent domain or condemnation proceeding.

"Any business that would come in there would pay less" than Advance Shoring does, said 24-year employee Steve Anderson. He said the company's location is key to its business and that a move could cause it to lose business.

But the Port Authority, which has the support of the District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council, contends that cleaning up and redeveloping the site could bring in more than 350 jobs and \$12 million in construction. The site is part of a redevelopment area that has been dis-

cussed in the North End for about 15 years.

Port Authority Director of Development Lorrie Louder said the Port would help the company relocate to a new site. The purchase and cleanup of the Jackson Street property is consistent with long-term plans for the area. She called the site "severely contaminated and underused."

Many area residents may not be aware that the cleanup and redevelopment of much of the property bounded by I-35E, Arlington, Maryland and the residential area to the west has been discussed for many years. East of Advance Shoring is the Arlington-Jackson Business Park, which contains four businesses and pays \$612,046 in property taxes each year.

Neighborhood plans have long called for the western part of the area to be cleaned up and redeveloped as well. One huge hurdle to redevelopment of the entire property has been the cost of cleaning up the contamination. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency records indicate the site, which is near a large junk yard and was polluted by a previous owner, has high levels of lead and petroleum contaminants. Elevated levels of methane are also a concern. The MPCA has reviewed and approved a Port Authority cleanup plan for the property but Advance Shoring officials say they are willing to clean up the property if they can stay there.

Louder said cleanup of the site could cost \$4.8 million. The Port has already obtained grants to help with the cleanup. She also noted that in 1994 company officials said they wished the Port would buy their property and that the Port is anxious to show the company other sites.



It will be November 26 at the earliest before more is known about the future of Advance Shoring, a longtime North End construction supply company. Whether the company moves from its location at 1400 Jackson St. is in the hands of the St. Paul City Council.

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Local Bites

By KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON

Snelling Avenue's East African restaurants

In the Midway along Snelling Avenue we are able to sample Ethiopian cuisine at Fasika, Eritrean food at the Snelling Café, and the Star Food Market & Deli (owned by an Oromo man) has the necessary ingredients to cook this delicious food at home. The base of these foods is the spice mixes used to flavor the savory stews and lentil or vegetable purees. They are all served atop and eaten with the spongy and light bread called "injera," made from the teff grain, reportedly the smallest and one of the healthiest grains in the world.

Fasika has a large menu and a full service bar with an open and bright ambiance which bursts into color when the platters of food arrive. The restaurant has been in operation since 2000 and has now earned a devoted following of patrons. The owners, Menderen Ge-

bretsadik and Atnafu Yeshedage, offer a wide variety of "wot" or stew dishes. There are several beef, lamb, chicken, vegetable, and fish dishes flavored with traditional Ethiopian spice combinations.

You could visit Fasika several times and not try everything, or you could be like me and order the same thing each time you visit. My husband loves lamb and we never cook it at home, so he chooses one of the lamb dishes or springs for the Lamb Combination platter (\$14.50) knowing he'll have leftovers for days to come. I like to get the Vegi Sampler (\$11.25) featuring their five vegetarian dishes including two kinds of lentils, split peas, greens, and vegetable "wot" (stew). The Ultimate Combination with a sampling of meat and vegetarian dishes (\$26.25) is plenty of food for a small group wanting a first taste of

this distinct and delicious food.

The Snelling Café started out as a coffee shop in 2003, and in 2007 owner Afeworki Bein expanded into the adjacent property to create the restaurant space. In order to appeal to a diverse clientele, the café offers breakfast foods, deli sandwiches, coffee drinks, and has a menu of international dishes including chicken curry and gyros. The specific Eritrean foods include lamb, goat, fish, beef, and vegetarian dishes.

The Foule Mudammas (\$4.89) appetizer consists of crushed fava beans, garlic, herbs, olive oil, yogurt, and chili powder. Served in a bowl with each item distinctly arrayed, the dish is accompanied by chopped tomatoes, onions, and jalapenos. Swirled all together the colorful food is then eaten with hunks of fresh French baguettes. It is a heavenly snack or

light meal.

The Vegetable Delight (\$7.50) includes sautéed spinach combined with garlic, herbs, and coconut milk in addition to Shiro, which is ground yellow split peas pureed with garlic, ginger, and onion. The combination is served on top of injera and with a small salad. It is plenty of food for two hungry people to split, as a friend and I did recently.

Have you had the opportunity to try Sambusa, the yummy fried pastry triangles stuffed with spiced vegetables, lentils, or meat? Afweroki Bein says that you must come in early in the morning to get Sambusa before they sell out. I mistakenly tried to get some during Ramadan and was out of luck.

I journeyed down the avenue to the Star Food Market & Deli, which is stocked with all the ingredients to cook an East African-inspired meal at home. Here are "halal" foods, which means "no pork" has been in contact with any of the products. Choose from batches of spice packets, racks full of locally prepared injera, sacks of basmati rice, a fresh meat market, and all sorts of surprises in each aisle.

The front of the market has been turned into a small coffeshop where patrons one afternoon were howling over a soccer match on tv. I was assisted by Mussa Jarso, an Oromo man working in the store, who told me the market opened in 2005. The Sambusa were \$1.00 each, and I regret that I was unable to buy more than the 3 that were left. The crumbled ground beef and

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is located at 555 North
Snelling Ave.**

onion filling was so savory, that they quickly disappeared and were equally enjoyed by my kids. Additionally I was able to pick up some Madazi (\$1.00 each) which are beautiful round puffs of fried dough that are ever so lightly sweet. They are the perfect snacks to eat along with some warm chai or coffee to drink.

In fact all of these establishments would love for you to taste their locally-roasted East African coffee and to learn about their cultures and traditions. Stop in for a visit, stay for some food, and know you've expanded your world view for a day. People around the world can always find connection through food.



Fasika has a large menu and a full service bar with an open and bright ambiance which bursts into color when the platters of food arrive.

Como Pool

Continued from page 3

The 12-member task force would include representatives from Parks and Recreation, appointees by council members Russ Stark and Lee Helgen, the district councils from Como Park and North End-South Como, STAR Swim Club, municipal athletics, the outdoor classroom, neighborhood pool users, a Lexington Parkway resident and the city's youth commission. Community design

charettes would be part of the planning process.

Some at the October 30 meeting demanded more, such as a seat on the task force for the Como Park Alliance, a group of park neighbors who want more of a say in how the park is operated and developed. Bierscheid said the task force makeup is "not open for discussion." But alliance members could apply for other spots open on the task force and could be appointed to represent other groups or constituencies.



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RAMSEY COUNTY RECYCLES
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In Our Community

Caregivers topic of Elders luncheon

On December 9 at 11:30 a.m., "Adult Children As Caregivers," will be the topic at a luncheon for HM seniors at 1514 Englewood Avenue (Hamline Methodist Church lower level). Dr. Bob Mantell, Ph.D., from the Hamm Clinic will address common road blocks in family care giving; situations and dynamic that might hinder care giving and when and where interventions might be helpful. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations and 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, visit www.blocknurse.org

History Corps monthly gatherings

Saturday, November 15th and Saturday, December 20, 2-4 p.m. at Ginkgo Coffeehouse.

Come bring some information to share, a question to pose, and your enthusiasm for neighborhood history. Bring a laptop if you have one and we'll do some more investigating with Placeography! All are welcome!

Block nurse program discussed

November is National Caregivers Month. Representatives from Hamline Midway Elders will be on hand to explain what your neighborhood block nurse program can do to help you with your care giving responsibilities on Sunday 11/16 from 2-4 p.m. at Ginkgos, Snelling and Minnehaha and on Saturday, 11/22 from 10-noon at J&S Coffee Shop, Hamline and Thomas. We'll purchase a beverage for persons interesting in learning more. There is no charge for the caregiver support we arrange.

Pearl Harbor Day Breakfast at Rosetown

Pearl Harbor Day breakfast at Rosetown The Rosetown American Legion Color Guard will serve their annual Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Breakfast on Sunday, Dec. 7 at the Post Home from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Volunteer Color Guard chefs will serve cheese omelets for \$6, and pancakes for \$5 (children under 4 yrs. old are free). The pancake breakfast includes sausage, juice, and milk or coffee.

Rosetown Memorial Post 542 American Legion is located at 700 W. County Rd. C in Roseville. For

more information, call 651-483-3535.

MMSA holds kindergarten 2009

Maternity of Mary-St. Andrew School will hold its first tour for families with prospective kindergarten students for the 2009-2010 school year on November 18 at 9 a.m. This is the first of our scheduled tours between now and the end of January when we will hold our Kindergarten Round-Up Open House & Registration. All families with age eligible children (5 years old by September 1) are invited to join us for a tour. It is a great way to learn more about MMSA and to see a typical day in the life of our students.

Join us for coffee/rolls, followed by a tour of our school campus. If you cannot attend the first tour, please call to put your name on our Kindergarten 2009 prospective student list to receive future mailings. Those interested in attending one of the future tours should call the school office (651) 489-1459 and speak with Melissa Dan, Principal. We look forward to meeting All families interested in learning more about Maternity of Mary-St. Andrew Catholic School. Please do not hesitate to call us with any questions. We look forward to seeing you at our first tour, November 18 at 9 a.m. MMSA School is located at 592 Arlington (at Dale Street).

MMSA offers a challenging and comprehensive curriculum for our kindergarten students, while nurturing their social, emotional, and spiritual needs at this young age. Kindergarten provides our young students with a nurturing and engaging learning environment that is characterized by strong student-teacher relationships, developmentally appropriate academic excellence, and student ownership of their school community. Our school environment and curriculum is grounded in our Catholic faith and traditions, and supported by the finest teachers and staff.

Zion to sponsor food collection Dec. 6, 13

Zion Lutheran Church, 1697 Lafond Avenue, will be collecting non-perishable food items or cash donations for the Keystone community food shelf on Saturday, Dec. 6 and 13 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the church. You may bring your donations and enjoy a hot cup of coffee or apple cider and share a holiday greeting with your neighbors. On Sunday, Dec. 14 Zion will bless the food collection as a part of its Santa Lucia celebration. Lucia was an early martyr of the Christian faith in Italy. She was to be married, but gave

her dowry to the poor instead and her life was taken because of that act of generosity. The Swedish people adopted the name Santa Lucia for the traditional day when the eldest daughter awakes before dawn and brings sweet bread and hot drinks to her family. Zion invites the community to share in this tradition.

Hamline Midway History Corps

Monthly gatherings continue on Saturday, November 15th and Saturday, December 20, 2-4 p.m. at Ginkgo Coffeehouse.

Come bring something information to share, a question to pose, and your enthusiasm for neighborhood history. Bring a laptop if you have one and we'll do some more investigating with Placeography! All are welcome!

Nova Classical Academy event

Nova Classical Academy is a K-8 public charter school offering a challenging, academically accelerated and enriched curriculum in the classical tradition. Nova will be adding grade nine in the fall of 2009 and will continue its expansion to a full K-12 school. On Thursday evening, November 20 from 6:30-8 p.m., Nova will host an Enrollment Event where you can learn more about Nova and our classical curriculum, meet faculty and students and tour the school. Student Shadow Days will begin in November. For further information join us at www.novaclassical.org or call 651-227-8622.

Christmas Cantata at Knox Church

Christmas Cantata December 14th, Knox Presbyterian Church, 1536 Minnehaha Ave. W., invites the community to its annual Christmas Cantata, "Candles and Carols", with Chancel Choir and Symphony Instrumentalists at 10 a.m. on December 14th. Following the Cantata there will be refreshments and family fun activities.

Rice St. Library offers activities

The Rice Street Branch Library has many activities planned for November and early-December. Please stop in and join us!

The library will offer family story times on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10:30-11:00. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs. All ages welcome.

A Bilingual Spanish-English

story time will be offered on Friday, Nov 21 from 10:30-11:00.

A Saturday Movie Matinee will be shown every Saturday at 2:00. Treats will be provided courtesy of the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. Please stop in or call the library at 651-558-2223 to learn which movie will be shown each week.

Teens in Action will meet on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4:15 - 5:15. Get involved, get connected! Campfire Teens In Action hosts activities that help you make your community better. Ages 12 & up.

Teen Time will be offered Wednesdays from 3:30-5:00. Join us for a rotating roster of activities each Wednesday! Book clubs, board games, video games, & crafts are just a few of the activities teens can do.

The Teen Book Club will meet Wednesday, Dec. 3 from 3:30-5 p.m. Please stop in or call the library for the title of the December Book Club selection.

The Runescape Club will meet on Thursdays from 3:30-5:00. Each week it's nothin' but Runescape. Bring your friends! Register at Rice Street's Reference desk.

Free Foreclosure Counseling will be offered by the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development on Wednesdays from 12:30-6:30. No appointment is necessary.

Free Job Search Assistance will be offered by a consultant from Goodwill-Easter Seals on Friday, November 14 from 10:30-12:30. No appointment is necessary.

North End Community Education will offer a class on Digital Picture Organization using Picasa on Tuesday, Nov. 18 from 10:15-12:15. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8811.

The North End Book Club will discuss Snow Flower and the Secret Fan by Lisa See from 12:30-2:30 on Monday, Nov. 14. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8811. This group is offered in partnership with North End Community Education.

The library will offer a Senior Social Time on Thursdays from 1:00-2:30. Join friends, neighbors or other older adults for a rotating variety of diversions, including wii, card games, activities, and lectures.

The STARS Homework Help Center is a quiet place for students of all ages to work on schoolwork. If you need help with homework or would like to be a Homework Helper, please visit STARS Monday through Thursday from 3 p.m.-7 p.m.

The Read with Me literacy program is still accepting applications! If you know of a child in 1st, 2nd or 3rd grade who needs help with reading or writing, or if you would like to tutor a child in the Read with Me program, please visit any branch of the Saint Paul Public Library to complete an application or call 651-266-7437 for more information

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 12:30-9 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; and Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. The library will be closed Thursday, Nov. 27 in observance of Thanksgiving.

For more information about these events, contact the Rice Street Branch Library at 651-558-2223.

Hamline United hosts two Barn Dances

Hamline United Methodist Church will host two Community Barn Dances on Friday, November 14 and Friday, December 12.

These two family-friendly events feature a three-piece Appalachian string band. Robin, the dance caller, teaches all the dances. Recommended donation is \$3/person or \$10/family.

Dancing is from 7-9 p.m. For more information, contact the church office at 651-645-0667 or check out the Friends & Fellowship page at www.hamlinechurch.org.

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The University Avenue Business Association (UABA) will host "LRT Construction Mitigation for Small Businesses" on Thursday, November 20th, 7:45AM – 9:00AM at Model Cities, 849 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104.

University UNITED has hired a consultant to research LRT construction mitigation for small businesses in other cities around the country. The final report from that study should help UABA develop concrete proposals for small business assistance.

The November 20th UABA event will include the LRT construction mitigation final report, an update on meetings with elected officials, and

discussion about developing concrete proposals for small business assistance.

There will be no December UABA event, however the intervening time will be used to prepare proposals for the January 15th UABA event with guest speaker MN State Senator Patricia Torres Ray. More details to follow.

Join us to learn more about seeking financial assistance for small businesses to survive LRT construction. Free and open to the public. A light breakfast will be served.

For more information contact Linda Winsor: linda@universityavenuebiz.com (651) 641-0334

St. Paul Schools accountability officer says district must change to survive

By JAN WILLMS

Business as usual just isn't going to cut it.

This is plain and simple truth reached by the St. Paul Public School (SPPS) District, as the administration takes a hard look at the overall academic system and its elusive targets.

"There is no way we can continue to operate as usual, regarding academic challenges, fiscal challenges and operational challenges," said Michelle Walker, chief accountability officer for SPPS.

In a recent report presented to the board of education, Superintendent Meria Carstarphen laid out areas of achievement, infrastructure and unmet goals. According to Walker, change is in the air, and it may not be comfortable for everyone.

"We have looked at a 20-year trend of enrollment, and there is a steady decline in our student enrollment," Walker said.

Part of this is due to students moving to charter schools, although enrollment is decreasing there also. Much of the decline is attributed to the changing population.

Walker said that many of the large numbers of kindergarteners from the 1990s are now reaching senior high level. Losses of 500-600 students per year are expected over the next five years. Fewer school-age children are living in the city of St. Paul.

Walker acknowledged that charter schools have opened around cultural programming, at-

tracting some of the families whose children previously attended public schools.

"For example, a charter school may be built around a German language program," Walker said. "We also have cultural programs, and it is one of the areas we are building on. To what extent can we strengthen such programs in our schools and prevent families from leaving?"

St. Paul public schools are also faced with increasing costs of operation. Walker said rising costs of fuel, utilities, wages and benefits all come into play. "We have to keep pace with inflation, and we have a fixed infrastructure," she said. She stated that the school has operating space for 45,000 students, with a total population of less than 40,000. The cost of heating the building remains the same, even if all space is not being used.

"We still have an achievement gap between Caucasians and students of color," Walker said. "Minnesota has one of the highest gaps in the nation, and our district is the highest." She said that gap has been leveling off over the past few years, and there has been an increase in proficiency.

"The good news is that this gap has not been widening significantly," she added. She said this year there has been a slight elevation in the gap for African American students, although with some ethnic groups the gap is closing.

"We want to raise the achievement level for all of our students," she declared. "As well as close the gap." She said this goal is part of

the challenge, because as achievement levels for Caucasian students grow, the gap would also increase.

Statistics show that half of SPPS students are proficient in reading and fewer than half are proficient in math. All student groups, however, have shown an increase in math proficiency. Reading proficiency growth is inconsistent across subgroups.

Walker said the state faces

challenges with English Language Learner (ELL) students and testing methods. The science assessment, for example, is an online assessment.

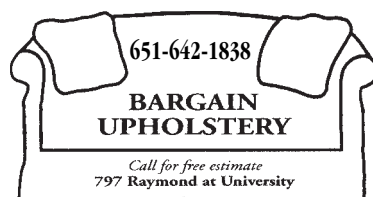
"Some of our ELL students have a real challenge when the test requires a certain amount of language proficiency," she said. "To assess appropriately and afford the right amount of time is a huge concern to us."

She said SPPS programs with ELL are good and have been recognized as some of the best across the country.

"Special education is also an area we have to watch," Walker stated. "We are trying to have students appropriately identified and make sure they are in the right areas."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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RS Eden

Continued from page 1

"My philosophy is that I want people (in this case RS Eden) to talk to me," Kuhl said. He said he wanted a business to come and address the land use committee as early as possible.

"It requires a lot of trust, and I am afraid the neighborhood didn't trust District 10 on RS Eden," he said.

He expressed concern that because of the opposition raised in the community, future developers may choose not to build in the Como Park neighborhood.

When asked if he left his position because of the ensuing controversy over the Sholom Home site, he said that was accurate.

Kuhl hoped that the next time the community entertained a possible project like RS Eden the process would be different. "I hope that new folks from the neighborhood really engage in the process and new projects.

When a little more time has passed, I can get back and move forward."

For Dan Cain, president of RS Eden, the onslaught of opposition caused his agency to rethink its offer.

"The Internet can be used as a source of information, but can equally be a dangerous source of misinformation," Cain said.

"There was a relatively small group who not only got the wrong information, but became committed to getting that information out and challenging anyone who disagreed with them."

A web page site, stope-den.com, was created quickly and flyers soon dotted the neighborhood. Cain said he believed it was an opposition by some to something they didn't understand. "They began attacking public officials based on assumption and speculation," he said.

Cain said RS Eden left, not because the agency was scared away, but for two other reasons.

"I did not want to let good public officials be attacked and

marginalized for talking," he said. "And secondly, I wouldn't let my people live in that neighborhood. I think it's a good neighborhood, but some people think the end justifies virtually any means."

The situation interested Neil Krause not only because he is a resident of the Como Park neighborhood, but also because as a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, he researches politics and affordable housing.

"I saw the flyers about six weeks ago, as I was driving home," Krause said. "They were everywhere, and they were alarming, with language designed to be shocking."

Krause said he was not surprised that there was opposition to the RS Eden proposal, but he was surprised at the level of opposition.

"I think RS Eden decided it wasn't worth it, and I probably would have come to the same decision," Krause said.

Krause said he thought the

opposition was pretty focused on lower income individuals with substance abuse histories. He had attended an October meeting that offered other recommendations for what could be done with Sholom Home.

"Senior citizens, health clubs or charter schools are apparently okay," he said.

Krause said he does not believe the current response was a deterrent to all development in the Como Park neighborhood.

"We will see, if there's another proposal, what kind of reaction there is," he said. Krause added that opposition to a controversial development is not unusual. He said many residents will resist in a negative way.

Krause said that research shows that low income residents are better off in a nice, economically advantaged neighborhood, with better schools and people with jobs. Living in an area with other lower income residents, they face more problems.

As to whether this brings more crime to a neighborhood,

Krause said each case needs to be looked at individually.

"In general, the fears are exaggerated," he said. "There are not lots of cases of affordable housing being plopped down into nice neighborhoods. Typically the opposition prevents that from happening." Krause also said that crime exists everywhere, no matter what the neighborhood is like.

Krause said his knowledge of RS Eden has shown that the agency plays a very supportive role in any of its developments.

"Negatives and disastrous consequences are more than likely an exception," he said.

For David Schultz, an ethics professor at Hamline University, much of what motivates the opponents seems to be a fear of the unknown.

"While residents have a legitimate concern in protecting their neighborhood, some neighbors appear to be opposing the RS Eden project before even being

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

Community forum

Continued from page 1

systems are very irregular. There are single pane windows."

Rufenacht said that on the

plus side, the location is on a bus route in a safe and stable neighborhood. It meets current fire codes, has two large areas for conference rooms and an outdoor courtyard.

"The window air conditioning is all working," she said. "There are several entrances and exits to the building."

In spite of the positives, however, Rufenacht said she thinks the building will be hard to sell.

"They don't like it to be vacant," she added. "People can move in, or kids can do graffiti."

Councilperson Russ Stark expressed his happiness that so many people attended the meet-

ing and showed an interest in the Sholom Home site.

"I come from a community-based organization," he said, "and I am a big advocate of community-based building."

He said that ultimately this sale is a private transaction, but there is an opportunity for the community to become engaged.

Stark said a development at Sholom might need variances and a change of zoning.

"Some form of public investment may be needed for residential housing," he said. "It would involve the city in some fashion. If Sholom had to destroy buildings in order to sell, that could cause other issues." Reportedly, the value of the Sholom property is \$5 million. Tearing down the building would cost \$1 million.

"Any future user will have to gut the building," Stark said. "The structure is solid, but it will have to have a lot of work done."

Joan Trulsen, of Planning and Economic Development (PED), said a purchaser could buy the property and turn it into apartment buildings. She said rezoning is possible, but it has to be approved by the City Council.

"It would not need to be rezoned for single family houses," she said. "But right now there is no market for single family homes. Multiple family rental housing is good right now."

She said a developer meets with PED, explains what financing he or she has and what gaps there are. She said PED has a portfolio of available sites in the city that is handed out to any interested developer.

For Sholom, numerous ideas have been presented. A center for the arts, state fair offices, medical/dental center, public library, Wellstone multicultural center, sculpture garden or skateboard park are only some of the suggestions set forth.

Since the sale of the home is a private transaction, the neighborhood doesn't control the outcome, according to Arbeit. However, in a letter to community members, Bruce Kahn, CEO of Sholom, indicated he would let the community know when someone is serious about purchasing the property. He said Sholom intends to participate on the ad hoc committee on land use.

Arbeit said the community was not so clear two weeks ago about what might happen with Sholom, but it was important to stop the fighting.

"Sometimes we don't agree," he said, "but that's fine. We can work together."



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RS Eden

Continued from page 12
willing to hear the facts in the situation," he said. "Not In My Backyard is often based on fear, prejudice and ignorance, and ethically one ought to listen to all of the facts and come to any hearings with an open mind."
John Marino, who has served on the District 10 Council, said the RS Eden proposal for reuse of Sholom Home was a very emotionally charged issue.
"There are some regrets, myself included, for perhaps being overheated," Marino said. "On the other hand, that's politics. People get upset and emotionally charged when the ball is rolling. The process of engaging a poten-

tial buyer was done in a way that didn't include the residents from day one."
He said he thought the situation was a growth experience, in which everyone learned a lesson.
Marino said that from a group of concerned citizens, six new members had been elected to the District 10 Council board. "That was a pretty good accomplishment," he said.
"I felt I could contribute an understanding of the workings of the board," Marino said. "At some point I probably got a little too personal and ruffled some feathers," he said, adding that things have since been smoothed over.
One of Marino's positions was that Como Park was already home to a number of institutions

whose missions involve populations at risk.
"I think we have already welcomed the Job Corps and the Booth Brown House," he said. Job Corps provides training for young adults with few resources, and Booth Brown is a shelter for adolescent girls operated by the Salvation Army. "It shows we do care about populations at risk. Booth Brown has been a wonderful neighbor for as long as I have lived in the neighborhood, about 15 years."
He added that the general consensus, though, is that three developments for at-risk populations would be one too many in the neighborhood.
"I saw my role as mainly trying to educate the residents about the workings of the Dis-

trict 10 Como Community Council, and help them become more involved in participating in the process," Marino said.
For resident Lori Klongtruatroke, the most important part of the process was to try and dispense factual information, rather than heated rhetoric.
When one of her neighbors became a very noticeable voice for the Sholom Home issue, Klongtruatroke became concerned that the views of the www.stopeden.com website would be seen as reflecting the neighborhood's voice on the issue.
"With the blessing of the creator of that website, I went ahead and created the more fact-based site, saleofsholomfacts.org," Klongtruatroke related. "I felt

strongly that our neighborhood needed a single fact-based source on the web in order to help spread the correct facts, information and meeting dates to our neighbors in a timely fashion."
She expressed concern that many residents never did get the facts or get a voice in the issue.
"For those individuals who are just now learning about what happened and may be disappointed about the way things were handled by various members of our community, I sympathize with them," Klongtruatroke said. Her website is still posted, and she said she hoped anyone further interested in Sholom House and its future would check it for any new information or meeting dates until the issue has been resolved.

RockTenn

Continued from page 7
Currently Rock-Tenn uses about 25 percent natural gas and 75 percent fuel oil to power its paper recycling operations. That ratio would be reversed under the existing proposal. By participating in efforts to produce biogas, Rock-Tenn could be able to buy its natural gas at a reduced rate, possibly at a 10 to 20 percent reduction eventually.
This option wouldn't require construction of a new facility at Rock-Tenn as the existing boilers could be used.
The Port-led team is looking options including sale of carbon credits to offset the natural gas discount, financing from the U.S. Department of Energy or of Department of Agriculture and ways to defray the costs of transporting the biogas.

If the biogas option doesn't materialize, the Port Authority's second choice is to build a new natural gas turbine at Rock-Tenn to co-generate electricity and steam.
The electricity would be sold to a utility company, with the steam used at Rock-Tenn. This would still be linked to the production of biogas in rural Minnesota.
The third option would be to build a gasification facility at Rock-Tenn that would use a renewable form of biomass, such as an agricultural crop, or wood, as a fuel.
The councils are weighing recommendations from a St. Paul Port Authority-led team and the Rock-Tenn Community Advisory Panel (RCAP). The panel included district council representatives as well as representatives of labor, the community at large and the Midway Chamber of Commerce.

District 6 news

Continued from page 4
All comments will be compiled and fed into the plan. In addition, CultureBrokers will be compiling hard data and conducting individual interviews of persons selected to represent demographic and lifestyle characteristics of the neighborhoods residents and businesses. Based on all this information, a community conditions report will be developed and reviewed by the public and District 6 Planning Council.
Written comments on the project and the community conditions report will be accepted until 5 p.m. on January 16, 2008. They may be submitted to Lisa Tabor of CultureBrokers LLC via e-mail to lisa@culturebrokers.com, fax to 1-866-842-4033 (toll free), or mail (111 Jessamine Ave. West, Saint Paul, MN 55117).

Meeting Dates and Places
Project Briefings
Tuesday, November 18th, 6:30 PM, Abetto's, 560 Como; Monday, November 24th, 7:30 AM, North End Elementary, 27 Geranium Ave.
Community Conditions Report
Tuesday, December 9th, 6:30 PM, Rice Street Library; Thursday, January 15th, 6:30 PM, Rice Street Recreation, 1021 Marion.
Presentation of the Plan
Thursday, February 19th, 6:30 PM, St. Bernard's Parish Center, 147 W. Geranium; Wednesday, March 4th, 6:30 PM, St. Bernard's Parish Center, 147 W. Geranium.
Planning for the North End/South Como Neighborhood Plan is a major initiative of Ward 5 Councilmember Lee Helgen and District 6 Planning Council.

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St. Paul schools

Continued from page 11

Minnesota students measure their achievement levels by taking the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) II tests. This is a state assessment that complies with the No Child Left Behind federal assessment program.

Twenty-seven schools in the SPPS district have been identified as in need of improvement; two are in corrective action and two are in pre-restructuring.

Washington Middle School is in corrective status.

Walker said the curriculum focus at Washington will be studied. The school currently stresses technology.

"We are keeping the best things at the school, and are doing what we can to make corrections," Walker said.

Regarding the overall concern for the district and its challenges, however, SPPS is going to make the case for change.

"We are pulling data together and want to educate ourselves, the board and the community," Walker said. "We want to engage the superintendent's cabinet to look at strategies."

She said this fall, the school district will work with the cabinet. "We will help them help us flesh out recommendations that may or may not require board actions."

She said SPPS will call on people on the front lines and teachers to bring in their best thinking and meet with the cabinet.

"We want to engage our community, inform parents and stakeholders about the issues," Walker said. "This will be the first step at laying the groundwork and making the case for change."

She said the superintendent is pulling together an advisory committee to work on solutions, with an application process for those interested in sitting on the committee. "We want to get people with expertise," she said.

She said this committee may make special recommendations to the board, and in addition present various options to the community



Washington Middle School students test out gliders they made in their class. The school stresses technology, and the school district wants to keep the best things at Washington in place. (Photo by Denis Jeong Plaster)

and get feedback.

"We want to connect with our partners in the community," she said.

This winter should bring results of facilities condition assessments and an educational adequacy study.

"We will review the findings and what changes need to occur there," Walker said. "What are the

facility conditions, and are we organized to support academic goals?"

She said by spring, there should be recommendations for the board to take action if necessary.

"Those changes may not happen until the 2010-11 school year," she noted.

"We have not discussed when

and if we close schools," Walker said. "We are looking at underutilized facilities. Twenty-four schools are at over 25 per cent under-capacity. What do you do in these instances? It's a conversation that we can't put off indefinitely."

Walker said a major priority for this year is cultural proficiency.

"With our current staff, we are creating a welcoming place for our families. Our human resources department is involved in recruiting and looking for diverse teaching staff. Certainly our staff does not reflect our students."

Walker said that in spite of the warranted changes, SPPS is making gains.

"But we have to do a lot more," she said. "There are certain goals to meet for No Child Left Behind, but we are holding our schools and ourselves accountable to our own goals."

Walker stressed the importance of shared accountability.

"We have a set of expectations for parents, students, community members, the board, administration and teachers," she said. "We are moving in the right direction."

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Hamline Dialogue Series: "Global Impacts on Nonprofit Organizations"

Join a panel of representatives from nonprofit organizations ECHO MN, Children and Family Service, Wilder Foundation, Center for Victims of Torture, and Neighborhood House to discuss how the global is also local. The event is **Thursday, November 20**, from 3:45-5:45 p.m. The cost is \$10 and includes refreshments. RSVPs are required; to register visit www.hamline.edu/business/dialogues/index.html

FINE ARTS

Romeo and Juliet

The Hamline University Theatre Department opens its seventy-eighth season with Shakespeare's ageless story of young passion. Performance dates include **November 6 and 8** at 7:30 p.m. and **November 7** at 8 p.m. in the Anne Smiley Theatre. For tickets: 651-523-2905.

Small College Jazz Festival

This annual festival features ensembles from Hamline, Macalester College, the University of St. Thomas, Normandale Community College, and Concordia University. The event is **Thursday, November 20**, at 7:30 p.m. in Sundin Music Hall. Free and open to the public.

Hamline University Women's Chorale and Winds Holiday Concert

The concert will take place on **Saturday, December 6** at 1:30 p.m. in Sundin Music Hall. For more information, call 651-523-2459.

Hamline University Orchestra Holiday Concert

The orchestra, conducted by Yali You, will perform in Sundin Music Hall on **Saturday, December 6** at 4 p.m. Guest pianist Cheng Chen, winner of the Schubert Club 2008 competition, will also perform, as will the Lipa Slovak folk dancers in traditional Slovakian costume. Free and open to the public

A Cappella Choir Christmas Concert

Featuring festive traditional and modern settings of the Christmas season, the concert will be held in the Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue on **Sunday, December 7** at 4 p.m. For information, call 651-523-2296.

Hamline University Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Combo Winter Concert

The jazz concert will occur on **Sunday, December 7** at 7:30 p.m. in the Anne Smiley Theatre. For more information, call 651-523-2459

Hamline International Piano Institute—Artist Diploma Piano Recital

Schubert Club competition winner Cheng Chen will perform on **Friday, November 21**, at 7 p.m. in Sundin Music Hall.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Tree Lighting Celebration

Kick off the holiday season and light up Hewitt Avenue at the annual Hamline University Tree Lighting Celebration. It will be held **Tuesday, December 2**, from 4:30-5:30 p.m. outside of Sundin Music Hall. We'll flip the switch, then warm up with carols, cookies, and cocoa.



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