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First Ward News -- Sabra Briere, Ann Arbor City Council.  
On the agenda, updates and what's on the horizon.



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## Sabra Briere

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Dear neighbors,

Unseasonably warm weather continues to bring out early spring growth. My daffodils are up and the crocuses are flourishing. During the past couple of weeks my yard has been graced by the presence of deer – a 3-prong buck (missing an antler) and as many as six does. It's a little unnerving to see them basking in the sun and nibbling on the early growth, but I chose to live near our urban forest. I've adjusted by planting fewer things that attract their attention.

While we may hear differing opinions on climate change, I'm grateful for this open winter. I could adjust to a winter like this one.

## On the Agenda

The Agenda is divided into several sections.

The Consent Agenda consists of resolutions – and theoretically ordinances – that are considered routine. All contracts under \$100,000 can be listed in the Consent Agenda.

Ordinances add to or amend the City Code – our local laws.

Ordinances require two readings and a public hearing.

Resolutions may have a budget impact (allocating or accepting funds) or may direct staff or set policy. Resolutions can be introduced by members of Council, result from actions taken by boards or commissions, or be recommended by staff. Resolutions require a single vote.

## Consent Agenda

The Council will consider a contract with Legacy Custom Builders

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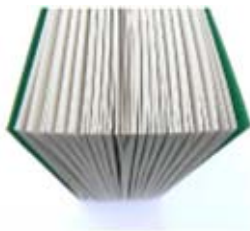


## Coffee wakes some of us up

I hold office hours 7:30 to 9 am on Mondays at the Northside Grill.

While I'm there, I meet with neighbors from all over our community to discuss the issues that concern them -- potholes, parks, trash pickup, construction noise, planning, zoning, City staffing and changes they like or don't like.

The folks at the Northside put up with political talk early in the morning. If you see me there, please wave, and if you have time, please, join me for coffee and a chat.



to restore the [West Park Pergola](#). The \$42,644 this contract authorizes would come from the Parks Maintenance and Capital Improvements millage.

This resolution is separate from any concerns regarding the swirl concentrators in West Park or the overall drainage system. If you are interested in issues related to water and West Park, there's a [Storm Water Project](#) public meeting on Monday, February 13.

There are other items in the Consent Agenda that provide information about our community's priorities. The City Council will vote to approve a grant with the Domestic Violence Project at Safe House (\$90,000) and another grant with Washtenaw County Health Organization for mental health care (\$38,000). These grants are from the 15<sup>th</sup> District Court.

### Ordinances

[Arlington Square](#), at the corner of Washtenaw and Huron Parkway, was approved as a PUD in 1989. The property owner is seeking an amendment to the development agreement; the Planning Commission recommends approval. There will be a public hearing and vote on whether to amend the development agreement.

### Resolutions

I learned a few weeks ago that a refunding bond was really a re-funding bond – that is, one that a municipality seeks when market forces reduce bond rates. It's an opportunity to re-finance. On the agenda this week is a [re-funding bond to re-finance a 2003 transportation bond](#) (total is \$2,850,000). By issuing this bond, the City anticipates saving \$185,000 in interest.

It's unusual to have a 'tentative contract' on the agenda, but it's a requirement in order for the City to obtain a low interest loan from the State Revolving Fund. The City seeks approval of a tentative award of a construction contract to rebuild the [wastewater treatment plant](#) (West Plant); this contract, if finalized, would be for \$92,929,000 and is one of the most expensive projects the City has recently undertaken. The West Plant has exceeded its life and was taken out of service in 2006. This construction project will result in restoring full capacity to the wastewater treatment plant. While the City has been planning for this project for years, it's also been straining the capacity of the East Plant (which was rebuilt and

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I spend a lot of time reading. I read about other communities, Lansing government, development and planning policy, transportation planning . . .

I highly recommend [Traffic](#) by Tom Vanderbuilt to anyone who wants to know more about whether signs, speed limits, speed humps and round-a-bouts are effective, and what happens with distracted drivers brains. I borrowed the district library's copy.

For that matter, read [The Invisible Gorilla](#) to learn more about how equipped we are to notice what we aren't looking for. (I know, I mentioned both of these books two weeks ago, but they are so pertinent!)

The topic for the year -- other than driving, that is -- might just be sustainable urban development. There's a lot on the web to teach this topic, and the web may be the best place to start.

Some web sites:

[Sustainable Cities Program](#)

[The Compact City on Google books](#)

[Public Places Urban Spaces on Google books](#)

## Caucus

The City Council holds a caucus meeting each

brought back on line in 2006). There is no plan to expand capacity.

At both the January 9<sup>th</sup> and January 23<sup>rd</sup> Council meetings the Council amended – and postponed – voting on the proposed **4-party agreement** that is one step toward approval of a regional transit authority. [Here's what I wrote on the proposed agreement](#) two weeks ago; there have been no changes since that meeting. Coverage on the Chronicle of these meetings is here ([January 9th](#)) and here ([January 23rd](#)). I also searched the Chronicle's entire site, and here's a [link](#) to all of their coverage (you'll have to click on each story to read)

The Council postponed voting, on both occasions, because they wanted more information. When the Council decided to postpone to February 6<sup>th</sup>, it was in expectation that there would be more information available about the proposed funding mechanism. That information is not available; I hope the Council votes to postpone to a date after such information is available.

There's also the continuing issue of the Articles of Incorporation. While the [current draft agreement](#) requires an affirmative vote on the Articles of Incorporation by the Council before those articles can be finalized, I would like to see a draft that has resolved all of the internal conflicts presently in the document.

## Other items

As part of the Council packet, the clerk's staff routinely attaches reports and letters. Two such documents might interest you: the [investment portfolio report](#) for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, 2011 and a letter from the State of Michigan regarding the City's most recent [audit](#).

Some Council members on the Audit Committee (which includes Briere, Hohnke, Kunselman, Smith and Teall) have raised questions about this letter, as the statement by the auditors when they presented the audit was that it was a clean audit without significant problems. Their report on internal controls states, in part,

*We did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above.*

*However, we identified a certain deficiency in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be a significant deficiency. . . . A*

Sunday prior to a Council meeting. This meeting is an opportunity for members of Council to discuss agenda items -- and pending issues - - with each other in public view. Members of the public are welcome to attend to bring issues to the attention of Council members. I go to almost all Caucus meetings.

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*significant deficiency is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.*

*We consider the deficiency described below to be a significant deficiency.*

*During our analysis of internal controls over the purchasing card process we noted that five of the twenty transactions sampled contained no purchasing card statement listing details of transactions that occurred during the month. The receipts detailing the purchases and the appropriate business purpose pertaining to these statements were also missing. Eight of the twenty sampled lacked approval of the purchase.*

**Recommendation:** *We recommend that the City require all departments to submit their credit card statements along with receipts and the documented business purposes to the purchasing card reviewer, on a timely basis each month, for all purchases made using City purchasing cards.*

**Corrective Action Response (by the City):** *The above comments indicate that all documentation must be received prior to disbursement for payment on the p-cards. Actually the p-card system is not designed to work that way. The p-card program automatically deducts the payment from the city's account at the beginning of the month and by policy the supporting paperwork comes in soon thereafter. Management's review of the transactions listed disclosed that in some instances where documentation was not available in accounting, the records were available in the department. Notwithstanding this, management acknowledges the policy requires documentation to be sent to and retained by the accounting department on a timely basis. Since supporting documentation has been subject to prior comment, the city changed its review in May 2011 so that every statement is reviewed by a single individual who is confirming that all documents and policies are being complied with. A review of this new procedure has indicated that requirements have been being met since May.*

You can see the [entire audit](#) on the City's website.

## Talking about the Budget

The Council will begin



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public discussion on the budget at the working session on February 13th.

Working sessions are held in the Council Chambers on the 2nd Monday of most months at 7 pm. They are televised.

I hope to have some additional information on the proposed budget, including the effects of having a positive fund balance at the end of the last fiscal year, between now and next Sunday (February 12th). I'll send you more information next weekend, I hope.

The City has begun the process of hiring more Police officers. I was told last week that there had been jobs offered, and that more job offers were pending. For me, this is good news.

Care to participate?



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On **Tuesday, September 7th**, the Planning Commission will consider a petition to rezone 1320 South University from D2 (downtown interface area) to D1 (downtown core area). New construction in D2 zoning areas is capped at a height of 60 feet; new construction in the South University portion of D1 zoning is capped at 150 feet. This is a pretty big difference. So far, no new construction has been approved for D2 zoning districts except for the new construction at Zingerman's.

The Non-motorized Transportation Plan Review public meetings are **Wednesday, February 8** at 3 and 6 pm in Council Chambers: [Non-motorized Transportation Plan Review Public Meeting is Wednesday, Feb. 8](#) (PDF)

Ann Arbor's second Sustainability Forum on Land Use and Access is **Thursday, February 9th** at the downtown library: [Ann Arbor Sustainability Forum - Land Use and Access - is Thursday, Feb. 9](#) (PDF)

The West Park Storm Water Project Public Meeting is **Monday, February 13th** at Slauson Middle School. [West Park Storm Water Project Public Meeting is Monday, Feb. 13](#)(PDF)

The Bluffs Nature Area

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Improvements Public Meeting is

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City Hall. [Bluffs Nature Area](#)

[Improvements Public Meeting is](#)

[Wednesday, Feb. 15](#)(PDF)

I-94 business loop improvements

(Washtenaw to Jackson) will be

discussed at Slauson Middle

school during a public meeting

hosted by MDOT on **Thursday,**

**February 16th.** [MDOT to Host](#)

[Public Meeting Thursday, Feb. 16](#)

[to Discuss I-94 Business Loop](#)

[Improvements](#)(PDF)

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