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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,

My garden has begun to bloom. I can't be alone in this, but I'm really enjoying the sight of winter aconite and snowdrops. The warm, sunny spots have early crocus. I feel an urge to clear away the winter debris.

This year the City compost operation plans to add topsoil to the items we can acquire. In addition to compost, there's wood mulch and pallet mulch. Delivery will be available. Sales begin in April, but residents will be able to pick up one (1) free yard of compost (or two at half-off) by using a RecycleBank coupon. Don't expect me to use a coupon, but you are welcome to do so.

## NOT on the Agenda

Two topics have dominated my recent meetings and email: the proposed 4-party agreement that would begin the process of creating a new, regional transit authority and the [University's decision](#) not to continue planning for a parking structure at the site of the proposed Fuller Road Station.

**Neither of these items is on the agenda for this week.**

I am still waiting for more information – including a financial plan – from the U-196 Board (that's the Unincorporated Act 196 Board). The financial advisory group cancelled an earlier meeting (January 24th), but the recommendations for a financial source to fund a regional transit authority are supposed to be available after their

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meeting on February 27th. I hope to attach this report to my next update. The Council will consider approval of the 4-Party Agreement until March 5th.

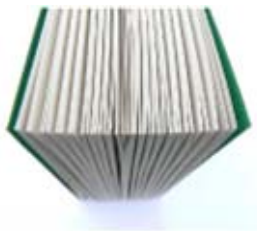
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## Coffee wakes some of us up

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.



At this point, planning for the Fuller Road Station continues. Since there was no plan to relocate the Amtrak station prior to 2014 – 2015, the City isn't allocating any funds for construction this year. I understand the environmental assessment and design phase will continue.

We all like to play at City planning – don't we? Some of our neighbors are offering to me alternatives to the proposed site for both University parking and the transit center. The University may or may not build parking on Wall Street, where originally intended. The City Council has no say in how the University uses its land, and their 2005 master plan for the medical campus calls for parking structures there. That predates their acquisition of the former Pfizer site, however, and their plans could change.

The transit center might be more rewarding to play with – conceptually. So if you want to take out your maps of Ann Arbor and propose alternatives, I'll be happy to hear from you. I'd ask though, that you consider the following constraints:

1. The land should already belong to the City. Land acquisition is expensive, and I'd prefer to talk about alternatives that are feasible.
2. The land ought to be really close to the railroad tracks, and in order for the train to stop at the station, the tracks should be straight and not curved at your preferred location. The rule of thumb is 800 feet of straight tracks.
3. The site should allow for sufficient on-site parking as well as the construction of a building.
4. The surrounding infrastructure should be able to bear additional traffic, including bus traffic. The existing train station sits on the flood plain; Depot Street gets as much as a foot of water across it during heavy rains. Flood issues, traffic patterns, stop lights, and surrounding (close) residential areas should also affect your choices.
5. The cost of construction should require (in your mind) an acceptable investment.

## What am I reading?

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

In honor of Black History Month, it's time for a little history: WEB DuBois wrote *The Gift of Black Folk: The Negroes in the Making of America* almost a century ago. It's time to refresh my mind.

Pete Hamill wrote a short essay "*They Are Us: A plea for common sense about immigration.*" Sam Harris wrote something even more provocative: "*Lying.*" It's a short discourse on why people lie, what happens to relationships and trust when they do, and what it's like to live without telling even white lies. It's always good to be reminded.

## Caucus

The City Council holds a caucus meeting each Sunday prior to a Council meeting, **but this week the Caucus is cancelled.** 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

## On the Agenda:

- City government will be closed on Monday, February 20<sup>th</sup> in recognition of President's Day. The Council won't meet until **Tuesday, February 21.** The City will still collect solid waste, though.

## Ordinances (First Reading)

The Council will vote to amend the construction code -- which governs where and how one can build -- by accepting the new FEMA flood map. You can see that ordinance change [here](#) and an interactive version of the map [here](#). I really enjoyed the ZOOM feature.

## Resolutions

Council members Smith, Teall and Hieftje are co-sponsoring a [resolution](#) regarding clean air as part of the Clean Air Promise. The [factsheet](#) for the Clean Air Promise doesn't give a lot of details about what, exactly, it entails. I did go searching and found recommendations that the EPA create a standard for ambient air quality; work to increase the transition away from fossil fuels and toward a clean energy economy; encourage the development of more fuel efficient and cleaner vehicles and improve and expand public transportation systems; and finally eliminate subsidies that support fossil fuel production.

For some time members of our community (and members of Council) have been complaining about derelict buildings that become fire hazards and otherwise unsafe. The Council will consider a [resolution](#) that will fund the maintenance or demolition of these structures. Because this amends the budget, it requires 8 votes. \$250,000 would be appropriated from the General Fund Reserve to establish this funding. Liens would be placed on the property and the demolition charges recouped at the time of a future sale -- or as part of a tax settlement.

## Reports

Council members.

Subject to most all Council meetings.

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Not everyone reads the reports attached to the agenda.

You might be interested in this one: [Communications](#) from the [Ann Arbor Public Art Commission](#) regarding the creation of a mural at Allmendinger Park.

## Talking about the Budget

Early working sessions on the budget have begun. On Monday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, the Council received official word regarding police staffing. The City budget had proposed that the police department numbers be reduced again (10 staff members). However, the financial situation is looking much better, and the department is actually gaining staff. They are already hiring. And that's good news.

If you want, please read the [presentation](#) from the staff on the budget. Then we can talk.



## Care to participate?

### Just for fun

I read the New York Times every morning. Sometimes, that's a major benefit to my soul. On February 13<sup>th</sup>, there was an article that just amused me – in the Science section of the Times: [What's New? Exuberance for Novelty Has Benefits](#). By [JOHN TIERNEY](#)

After reading it, I took the [quiz](#).

## Meetings and events

Stabilizing Traver Creek's banks may not seem very controversial, but many of us have been surprised by the amount and type of work needed (Traver Creek below Barton was stabilized last summer; work continues on Malletts Creek near Huron Parkway). The City staff and the Washtenaw County Water

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Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>(7-9 pm) at the Leslie Science and Nature Center, 1831 Traver Road. If this issue is important to you, I hope you can make it.

Also on Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, is a panel discussion hosted by the League of Women Voters about privatizing government functions. Panel members are: Lois Richardson (Ypsilanti City Council); Susan Baskett (AAPS Trustee); Bob Guenzel (former County Administrator) and me! The League of Women Voters hopes you can come to the Ann Arbor Public Library (downtown) at 7 pm. This presentation will be filmed, in case you want to see it later.

The Michigan Presidential Primary Election is Tuesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. While all the excitement is focused on the Republican primary, Democrats may still vote. Because this is a public primary, your party preference will be recorded.

The Washtenaw County Road Commission will host a public meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm to talk about improvements for the intersection of State and Ellsworth at the **Pittsfield Township Hall, 6201**

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Michigan 48108. Although

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many of us use that route  
frequently.

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