

## Possible Ballot Questions and What's on the Agenda



Dear Neighbors,

One summer about 15 years ago I joined others in complaining about the weather – Ann Arbor had experienced temperatures over 90 degrees for over a week. This year, it seems to me that we are grateful if our temperature falls below 90. According to the [weather data](#) I found, the average high temperature in July is equal to the coolest day in July this year (82 degrees). The average daily high was over 90. Rainfall is down by about 6 inches this year. No wonder the river and our yards are so dry.

The good news is that the City is better prepared this year for drought-like conditions. There's been no need to impose water restrictions. (I remember being urged to water only on odd-numbered days, and to restrict showers and baths, as well. But that was about 15 years ago.)

The Argo Cascades were briefly closed to canoe/kayak traffic because the water volume was so low; the canoe livery would rent boats for use on Argo Pond, but not for travelling down river to Gallup and beyond. I heard from fly fishermen who wanted all of the water diverted from the cascades, and more water flowing from the dam into the river. But the ½ inch rain we received earlier this week seems to have made a difference; yesterday the City reopened the Argo Cascades.

Earlier this week I met with the City Administrator to talk about sidewalks – sidewalk gaps and whether the City could require sidewalks in all new developments. As a community – and as a City government – we continue to encourage more and safer pedestrian uses. I believe we should consider sidewalks an improvement to (and an investment in) our community.

## On the Agenda

The first Council meeting in August is frequently more interesting than anyone expects. It's on Thursday instead of Monday (in order for those folks up for election the next day to focus on that) and that delay gives Council members and staff additional time to prepare – and to offer new resolutions. This newsletter cannot highlight any items added to the agenda after Friday and still be done on time. To see the entire agenda, [please follow this link](#).

## Ordinances and Public Hearings

### Industrial Development District

The Council will hold a public hearing on whether to establish an [Industrial Development District](#) (IDD) for the building that was formerly Borders Corporate Offices (before they moved their offices elsewhere, and before the business died). You may not know where this building is, because it's not on Liberty. It's on Maynard, and the entrance is under the 'bridge' formed by the parking structure.

This item was previously on the agenda, but was referred to the Budget Committee for discussion. The Budget Committee didn't achieve a quorum at its meeting (July 31), but Council member Higgins and I agreed to bring the resolution back to Council for consideration. If the Council grants the IDD, the incoming tenant (Barracuda Networks) will be able to apply for tax relief for the next five years while it expands into this space. The City would absorb an annual decrease in taxes from Barracuda of about \$5M, but anticipates that the improvements to the

property and the influx of both capital spending and discretionary spending by employees of the company will offset that decrease.

## Knights Market

Up for First Reading is an ordinance to change the zoning for property on Spring Street – [Knight's Market](#). The public hearing on this zoning change – and the final vote on the request – will occur in September.

There's also a proposed ordinance amendment, to comply with IRS regulations, for the [employee retirement system](#).

## Resolutions

### Parks

There are two resolutions on the agenda that would affect parks – if Council places them on the ballot and you all agreed.

The first resolution is to place a [millage renewal for parks maintenance and capital improvements](#) on the November 6th ballot. This millage renewal (which would extend the current millage to 2018) proposes 1.10 mills and estimates total revenue in the first year of the new millage, if approved, of \$5,052,000. Subsequent annual revenue will be adjusted based on the Headlee rollback and property value adjustments.

What's the effect of the Headlee rollback? The current millage has been in place since voters approved it in 2006. The current cost of the millage to an 'average homeowner' based on a mean taxable value of \$107,000' is \$117.37 per year. If the millage is renewed, that amount will change to about \$117.70 for FY2014, and will then ratchet downward again.

The second resolution is to place a charter amendment on the ballot that would require voter approval prior to the City entering into any long-term (over 5 years) lease of park land [for any purpose that isn't park -- or recreation -- related](#).

This item was on the agenda at the Council's last meeting (July 16) and was postponed – and I moved to postpone it. When I offered to co-sponsor the resolution, it said one thing; when it was amended, it said something different. I didn't really notice how different it was until the afternoon of July 16; I also learned that the PAC (Parks Advisory Commission) had not been involved in drafting the resolution. I have heard, over the years, that the Council's failure to consult with PAC causes problems. I don't want to perpetuate that.

PAC will meet to discuss this ballot proposal on August 8th. I expect the City staff to have provided more information about the impacts and opportunities of the charter amendment, if it is placed on the ballot. The Council will consider the proposed charter amendment question on August 9th.

### **Take a short poll on this charter amendment!**

#### About amendments

**Some resolutions and ordinances are easy to amend at the table; others need to be carefully researched so the proposer understands the implications of the amendment. Council members aspire to make amendments thoughtfully, but sometimes make mistakes in language usage. Any changes in the text (other than grammatical) that are proposed for a Charter Amendment need to be approved first by the State Attorney General's office; this means that such changes cannot easily be done at the table during a Council meeting.**

**Amendments are always appropriate, and generally move the Council closer to approving a resolution or ordinance.**

Seven (7) members of Council (minimum) must vote to approve placing a ballot question on the November 6th ballot; if seven members cannot agree, the question will not appear on the ballot.

### Fire

The Council will consider a resolution to purchase a new ['mid-mount 100 foot aerial platform'](#) (better known as

a Tower Truck) for the fire department. This would replace the existing tower truck, which will be kept in reserve. The City's current tower truck was purchased in 1999; the mount for the 100' ladder has been broken more than once. Repairs are costly and slow. Generally, the Fire Department prefers to have its equipment remain in active service for no longer than 15 years; the City also has a 100' aerial platform (purchased in 1996) that remains in reserve.

Opening the budget to allocate \$1,043,685 from the Fleet fund reserves requires 8 votes.

## Infrastructure: water and streets

On the consent agenda are two purchase orders (POs) for Water Main Infrastructure Materials to ETNA Supply Company and EJ, USA (\$57,472.66 and \$26,956.41 respectively). These expenditures were anticipated; funds for these POs were placed in the 2013 budget and come from the operating budget (Water Supply).

There's also a resolution to purchase maintenance supplies and to upgrade and/or rebuild [traffic signals](#), using Carrier & Gable as the sole source supplier (\$475,000). Carrier & Gable is the only company in Michigan/Indiana that supplies the equipment that matches all our traffic signaling devices. This expenditure was anticipated; funds for this purchase were placed in the 2013 budget, and come from the operating budget (Major Streets).

## Transportation

At the most recent County Commission meeting, the Articles of Incorporation were amended to require a 4/5 vote (12 out of 15) instead of a 2/3 vote (10 out of 15) for any change to the articles. This amendment requires that the 4-Party agreement and the Articles of Incorporation return to the Council agenda. (Here's a [link to the coverage in AnnArbor.com](#); here's a [link to the coverage in the Ann Arbor Chronicle](#).) The amended version should be on Thursday's agenda by Monday, but is not yet there.

## Demolition

The City established a fund to pay for the demolition of derelict properties. Thursday's agenda should include a resolution that establishes contractual procedures for this demolition; I believe the first properties that will be demolished will be the houses that remain on the Near North (North Main) site. This resolution is also pending, and I haven't seen the text.

## Events and Street Closings

The Muslim Community Carnival, if approved by Council, will be held August 26th at the Southeast Park (the corner, more or less, of Platt and Ellsworth).

With Council approval, South Main between Huron and Liberty – and Washington between Ashley and Fourth Ave. – will be closed for Dancing In the Streets, September 2 from noon to 7:30 pm.

And the OutFest would take over North Fourth Ave. between Kingsley and Catherine – if Council OKs this – on September 29th from 4:30 to midnight.

## Reports

The Ann Arbor Public Art Commission has issued their list of [proposed projects for 2012/13](#). AATA has provided their most recent [financial and performance reports](#).

As always, there are other items on the agenda that I haven't included in this briefing. Please see the entire agenda [here](#).



## Quick Poll

[One question poll on the proposed amendment to the City Charter](#)

This is a quick poll about the proposed amendment to the City Charter regarding park use.

Yes, yes. I know it's not scientific.



## Coffee wakes some of us up

Almost every Monday morning you can find me sitting in one of the booths at the Northside Grill (on Broadway near the Broadway bridge). I arrive about 7:30 am and stay through 9 am.

I know mornings aren't convenient for everyone, and that the Northside is just one place to be. But this is perfect for casual conversations, at least, it is to me.

If you cannot drop by then, just let me know. I'm very happy to come to you, at a time that's convenient for both of us. But if you can stop by, fill me in on your perspective about the issues, and maybe drink a cup of coffee with me, that would be great.



## On the Horizon

PAC (the Parks Advisory Commission) will hold its Land Acquisition Meeting, followed by a special PAC meeting to discuss the proposed charter amendment on parks usage, on Wednesday, August 8th at 3:30 pm in City Council Chambers.

The North Main/Huron River Corridor Task Force will meet for its second meeting on Wednesday, August 8th at 5 pm in the Basement Conference Room at City Hall.

The City is seeking input on its Hazard Mitigation Plan. Here's a [link](#) to the plan. You can comment on or before August 12 by emailing Rick Norman ([rnormal@a2gov.org](mailto:rnormal@a2gov.org)), by calling him (734-794-6980) or in writing by mailing to City of Ann Arbor Safety Services/Police Department, attn: Rick Norman, 301 E. Huron, Ann Arbor, MI 48108.

The draft ZORO (Zoning Ordinance ReOrganization) project draft report is ready for review. For more information, including a timeline of this project, [look at the City's website](#). Here's a [LINK](#) to the draft report.

**Tuesday, August 7th** is the primary election – for both Democrat and Republican parties. If you vote in one, you may not vote in the other, but Michigan doesn't have party registration, and how you vote (or for which races you vote) will not be recorded – only that you voted.





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## Blog

Everyone has an ego, even I. So please forgive this shameless link. Sometimes I want to think and talk about ideas that have nothing to do with agenda items. I'm doing that on this blog. I encourage you to comment or even engage in a conversation. But play nicely, please.

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