

News, update and What's on the Agenda!



Dear Neighbors,

Winter makes us starved for summer; this summer has been making us hide indoors. But this is a busy week and a splendid time to actually go outside.

Sunday, July 15th is **Huron River Day**. Rent a canoe or kayak, float from Argo to Gallup; watch the inaugural Ann Arbor Triathlon! I hope you'll take advantage of the opportunity to be beside the river.

On Tuesday evening I attended the MDOT meeting at Abbot School as the MDOT staff presented concepts of the **4-to-3 lane conversion along Jackson Road**. There are a lot of things about traffic that are counter-intuitive. It's hard for my gut to accept that increasing the speed limit would make driving safer in some locations. I've seen the reports that show accidents drop off, but it still feels just wrong. In that light, many of us find it counter-intuitive that decreasing the number of lanes would make driving safer in some locations. It's that decrease that's proposed for Jackson Road.

Here are some [documents](#) and websites on road diets (4-3 lane conversions) (these are just some I'm reading; you can google it and find more – many about findings from other states, including Iowa):

[Federal Highway Administration Evaluation of Lane Reductions](#)

[IOWA'S EXPERIENCE WITH 4-LANE TO 3-LANE CONVERSIONS](#)

[Technology News: 3 \(lanes\) can be safer than 4](#)

[Converting Four-Lane Undivided Roadways to a Three-Lane Cross Section: Factors to Consider](#)

[Pedestrian and Bicycle Roadway Design](#), safe, smart and defensible

[Beyond Roadway Levels of Service—Mobility, Accessibility, and Sustainability Indicators](#)

And here's a couple of short films:

[MBA Road Diet](#)

[Revisiting Donald Appleyard's livable streets](#)

that I found while trying to learn more about 4-to-3 lane conversions.

Here's the [presentation](#) that members of Council saw in February about this specific conversion.

Here's a [link](#) to the coverage of the meeting in The Chronicle.

I'm happy to hear your thoughts and concerns.

On Wednesday evening I attended the first meeting of the **North Main Huron River Corridor** task force. I'm not a member of this task force, but I wanted to learn more about the direction this effort might take. You may remember that Council member Smith and I offered the resolution that established the task force. There are currently 13 members, and all were able to make this first meeting.

One of the first tasks that this group must complete is to develop recommendations for 721 N. Main (the old City yards) as a part of the Allen Creek Greenway trails. At least two members of the task force will be joining City staff and others who are working together to create recommendations; these recommendations will then come to the task force and then to Council by December 31.

In the meantime, other members of the task force will be studying possible solutions to the problems surrounding bike and pedestrian access to the Huron River parks from North Main. Recommended access locations will be part of a series of recommendations (including traffic flow and the best use for the MichCon site, were it to become a City Park) must be

presented to the City Council by July 31, 2013.

Here's a [link](#) to the resolution that City Council approved.

Here's a link to [The Chronicle's coverage](#) of the discussion about that resolution, as well as to several other items that will be considered on the agenda for Monday, July 16th .

On the Agenda

This isn't a light agenda. Once again, the members of Council will miss the Townie Street Party (unless they go way early!).

Consent Agenda

Generally, the City's consent agenda contains items that the staff anticipates will be easily approved. From time to time, members of Council pull items from the Consent Agenda to discuss or question certain aspect. On the July 16th Consent Agenda is an item to approve a contract for the design of the [Skatepark](#) (at the corner of Dexter and Maple). The cost of this contract (\$89,560) and subsequent construction is covered by donations and grants; no City tax dollars are being used to build the Skatepark.

There's a [Public Hearing and Vote on the Maple Cove Apartments and Village](#) site plan. This project is not a PUD or a Planned Project, and fits the zoning of the site.

Ordinances



At First Reading is an Ordinance to rezone parcels acquired as part of [Bluffs Park](#) to PL (public land). Bluffs Park, a wooded park lined with foot and bike trails, links three streets (Huronview, Sunset and North Main). These parcels were acquired to provide entrances to Bluffs.

Resolutions

Someone once accused me of burying the lede (leaving until last the most important part of a story). I'm not going to do that today, and hope that you'll notice that there are a lot of significant issues on the agenda for July 16th.

Up for discussion is a **Council-initiated resolution to place an issue on the November ballot that would amend the City's Charter.**

You may remember that the Council placed an issue on the ballot in 2008 that passed – and changed the charter so that the City could not sell any designated park land without the consent of a majority of voters in an election. That charter amendment didn't include limiting the City's ability to engage in a lease – long term or short term.

This [proposed charter amendment](#) would offer the voters the opportunity to change that. Council member Lumm worked closely with the City Attorney's office and City staff to draft this resolution and the ballot language. Council member Anglin and I are co-sponsoring. This resolution would require 7 votes.

The City has been trying to reuse the **415 W. Washington** building and site for longer than I've been on Council. A process that resulted in several proposals didn't meet the City's needs. At one point, it appeared as if the building might have to be demolished. Using this site as a pivotal development site for the Allen Creek Greenway trails didn't seem to be feasible unless we could find a use for the building, or remove it completely.

The committee studying this site presented a [proposal to Council](#).

If the Council agrees to approve the funding for the site work at [415 W. Washington](#) (a one-time use of \$50K from the General Fund reserves, requiring 8 votes), several barriers to the use of the site can be removed, and the committee will know more about possible future uses for the existing buildings.

Police Chief Barnett Jones retired from the City last spring. Since then, Assistant Chief John Seto has been acting as interim Chief. On Monday, the Council will consider a [resolution to appoint John Seto](#) as Safety Services Administrator (overseeing both police and fire departments as well as emergency management) and Police Chief. When possible, it's really good to hire internally. This is one of those times. Council must approve the selection of the Police Chief.

Our home is degrees cooler than some other locations in Ann Arbor because we're lucky enough to have mature trees creating a cooler canopy. In some parts of town, trees are dying (heat, lack of water, neglect, disease) or are simply missing – and walking along those streets is hot and less pleasant, especially this year. On the agenda is a resolution to [award a contract to Margolis Companies](#) (a Michigan Corporation, having its offices at 9600 Cherry Hill, Ypsilanti, MI 48198). This contract covers the cost of purchasing, delivering and planting trees along City street rights-of-way. This contract (\$295,925) would be funded by 2013 Storm Water capital budget.



Last year we had entirely too much rain, especially in the spring. It seems a long time ago, now. But one of the results of that rain was that the **Ann Arbor Railroad rail embankment collapsed**, flooding Plymouth Road and damaging Plymouth Park. (The photo above shows two boys walking under the tracks, with the embankment gone.) Many of us who live nearby watched last spring's cleanup and have been waiting for all the work restoring the wetland to be finished. There's a resolution on the agenda to open the budget and appropriate \$107,687 (8 votes) from the Parks Maintenance and Capital Improvements fund for a contract to restore the wetland. (If you never noticed a wetland as you sped along Plymouth Road near Broadway, it was to the northwest side of the street. Recently it had been filled with cattails, but before Plymouth Road was widened it included a spring-fed waterfall.)

Other items

As always, there are other items on the agenda that might interest you. The paths at Leslie Science Center need to be improved and there's a contract to cover those costs (\$115,309); the Plumbers and Pipefitters plan a 5K race, and want to extend the street closures already approved for the UA Block Party; the loader at the Materials Recovery Facility needs new tires (\$26,678.88). Here's a [link](#) to the entire agenda. Please let me know if there are items that interest or concern you.



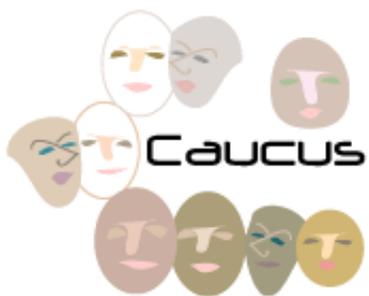
Your ticket to park

I really like the new underground parking structure -- aesthetically.

Mind you, I haven't yet parked there. I understand hourly parking won't be available until after the art fair, and right now the final inspection is still pending.

But I have a deal for two of you. I have two passes to give away that will let you use the underground parking structure for free, but only once. It's a tease to get you to try it.

If you are up for the adventure, let me know. The first two to claim a parking pass win.



Caucus

The City Council holds a caucus meeting each 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. Caucus is held in Council Chambers and starts at 7 pm.

I go to almost all Caucus meetings.



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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. Lately I've met with neighborhood groups to talk about utility issues. Last week Interim Police Chief John Seto joined me for an hour or so.

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.



On the horizon

[Miller Road improvements](#), slated to begin construction in 2013. Meeting on July 25 at 7pm at the Calvary United Methodist Church, 1415 Miller Ave. (at Miller and Newport Place).

As the design for the roundabout at the Miller/Newport intersection was developed, it was determined that there was not currently sufficient space within the public right-of-way to construct a roundabout of the necessary size. Therefore, the roundabout project was put on hold pending further engineering analysis, and will not be constructed with this project. Instead, we will be making some improvements to the Miller/Newport intersection very similar to Option B listed above.

There will be a public meeting on Thursday, July 26 from 5:30-6:30 [at 219 W. Kingsley St.](#) (corner of Kingsley and First Street) to discuss the demolition of a house and the proposed installation of a rain garden and public art project on the site. The house – boarded up for some time – at 219 W. Kingsley is in the Allen Creek floodway and has been damaged several times by floods. Ann Arbor used FEMA grants to purchase 215 and 219 W. Kingsley and holds some of that grant money for demolition. The City intends to use non-FEMA monies to install and maintain a rain garden. The 1% for Public Art fund would pay for the public art installation.

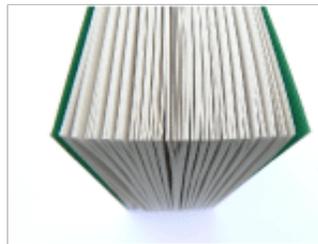
Events

Sunday, July 15th is the reskilling festival: 10-5 at the Rudolf Steiner School, 2230 Pontiac Trail

Sunday, July 22nd is the The Northside Neighborhood Party at Beckly Park, 4-8 or so, games and pot luck.

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What am I reading?

My summertime reading includes a new Inspector Lynley (Believing the Lie), a book about James Garfield (Destiny of the Republic), one about Spinoza (A Book Forged in Hell) and a bunch of articles about smart meters and road diets.

Some of the stuff about road diets I've pasted in above. But if you are interested in smart meters and health, here's what I've been reading:

[Smart Meters](#)

Here are some links to information:

[Berkeley Lab review of an American Academy of Environmental Medicine](#)

(A report done specifically for Michigan)

[Human Exposure to Radio Frequency Energy from local wireless networks](#)

[Health impacts of radio frequency from smart meters](#)

[Health affects of electro-magnetic fields](#)

[Cell Phone Safety report](#)

[Vermont public health assessment of radio frequency radiation and smart meters](#)

[Berkeley Lab review of report on health affects of smart meters for Santa Cruz, CA](#)

[Digital Smart Meters and Health \(about energy\)](#)

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