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Next on the Agenda, updates on the budget talks, and what's on the horizon.

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Sabra Briere

First Ward, City Council

sbriere@A2gov.org

sabra.briere@gmail.com

995-3518 (home)

277-6578 (cell)

Dear Neighbors

I write this as I watch yet another soft snow fall. But this morning I watched the rain, and saw some early signs of green in my garden. Spring is on the way!

On the Agenda

A public hearing on the proposed Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Improvement Authority

You may have missed the discussion on this one. This is a public hearing; no action by Council is being taken at this time. However, you need to know the plan behind the public hearing. I'm closely paraphrasing the information provided to Council:

In 2008, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners launched the Ann Arbor Regional Success Strategy initiative to develop "economic and quality of life assets in the region needed to succeed in the new economy." One of the recommendations to come out of initiative is to transform Washtenaw Avenue into a "talent center" that can promote economic growth in the region. To accomplish this, the Strategy calls for redevelopment that will turn the Washtenaw Avenue corridor into a walkable, mixed-use transit corridor that provides an array of housing types and connects to employment and educational centers. The Council heard about this plan at a working session late last year as part of the presentation on the Washtenaw Corridor Study.

One of the recommendations was for the four communities (Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township and Pittsfield Township) to form a Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) that could help implement a number of improvements to the

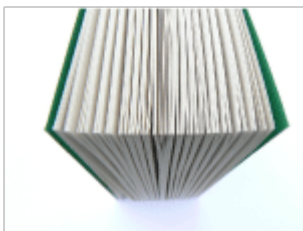


Morning Coffee?

For the last three years, I've resisted requests to host 'office hours'. I'm not a professor. I don't have an office. And I've been able to meet with nearly anyone, anytime it's been convenient for us both.

But recently the Council caucuses have been hard to get to, and I've not heard from as many people about issues as I'd like to. So, here's a not-very-secret. I'll be having breakfast every Monday morning at The Northside Grill between 7:30 am and 9:00 am. For many people, that's before you go to work. For others, it might fit into your before school/after gym schedule. Of course, if this doesn't fit your schedule and you want to talk, just call or write.

And please, join me for coffee and a chat.



What am I reading?

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

corridor. CIA's have the ability to, among other things, form a tax increment financing district to fund future public improvements to the corridor. Possible improvements include, but are not limited to: developing long range plans, constructing street improvements, acquiring right-of-way, constructing public facilities, improving land and constructing buildings, and providing non-motorized and transit system improvements.

On December 20, 2010, City Council endorsed a Resolution of Intent to evaluate the feasibility of creating a multi-jurisdictional CIA for Washtenaw Avenue. The goal of the CIA would be to encourage public and private sector investment into this major mixed-use transportation corridor.

For more information, the City's Planning staff have established a website with documents and information here:

<http://www.a2gov.org/government/communityservices/planninganddevelopment/planning/Pages/CorridorImprovementAuthorityProject.aspx>

The PROS Plan

The City Council must either approve the PROS (Parks, Recreation and Open Space) Plan or Reject it. Council cannot amend it. This is a big document with some major community interest. The Planning Commission approves it; if Council approves it, it is added to the set of Master Plans that the City staff members rely on.

Because the agenda has several supporting documents in addition to the final version of the PROS plan, I've pasted in a link to the attachments to the agenda. Please look at what might be in the works for your neighborhood and the City as a whole - and don't forget to consider both Open Spaces and Fuller.

There are some repercussions if Council does not approve the PROS plan at this meeting. As I understand it, deadlines for State grants are coming up, and the plan needs approval before those grants can be submitted. If the Council rejects the plan as written and requests the Planning Commission edit it, the deadlines for the grants may be missed.

If the Council sends this back to the Planning Commission, it has to do so with some specific guidance. If you have comments or questions about the PROS plan, as currently approved by

<http://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=843958&GUID=6F17302E-13BC-4564-A247-1B5432F37FFE&Options=&Search>

New bond approvals

It's not James Bond we're talking about, but water supply and sewage disposal

Here's my current and recent reading list:

A series of academic studies from Canada about panhandling, homeless services, and legislation as part of the Street Outreach Task Force work. These were really interesting, and full of recent information and statistics.

The Roxbury Report (I just re-read this report in preparation for the Library Lot RFP Advisory Committee meeting, which was postponed).

An independent report on conference centers, with a focus on the Library Lot, by Charles Skelton (also in preparation for the Library Lot RFP Advisory Committee meeting)

[Triumph of the City](#), by Edward Glaeser

[A Pattern Language](#), by Alexander, Ishikawa, Fiksdahl-King and Angel

[Aerotropolis: The Way We'll Live](#)

[Next](#), by Kasarda and Lindsay

Just because I read it, doesn't mean I agree with it.

bonds. Two relatively small bonds are on the agenda for approval (\$755,000 for water supply; \$1,365,000 for sewage disposal/footing drain disconnects). The water supply bonds will help pay for work being done at Harbal/Leaird and Nob Hill. Both small bonds will be revenue bonds, paid for with funds from our water bills (with 2.5% interest over 20 years).

Medical Marijuana dispensary and cultivation facility licensing

This ordinance was postponed at the last meeting of Council. It's still on First Reading. There has not been a public hearing on the ordinance.

This ordinance has been amended multiple times since first introduced to the Council's agenda on December 6, 2010. Each amendment has, I believe, brought some improvements to the document. At least, that's been the intent. Members of Council and members of the staff have learned more about medical marijuana in the ensuing months, but there is probably more to learn. Of course, the goal is not to know everything, but to make a decision about whether to license dispensaries and cultivation facilities.

The goal is to decide what would work best for the health, safety and welfare of our community, while writing legislation that supports the Michigan Medical Marihuana Act and our City Charter. I look forward to our success.

A resolution to authorize the DDA to plan for the redevelopment of city-owned parcels downtown

I've had a lot of conversations (with mostly the same few people) about this proposal. The issue boils down to whether the DDA should be 'given' authority that rightfully belongs to the Council. I'm not going to argue in favor of the DDA, but I want to clear up the premise that the Council would be losing any authority if they designate the DDA to plan for redevelopment.

Here's my view. This proposal won't take away the Council's ability to approve the RFP or approve the recommendation of the RFP committee. It won't affect the Planning Commission's role in approving the development, or affect the City Council's overall role in approving the final development or the development agreement. It appears to involve much more formal public involvement than the current practice. It also requires that the City pay the DDA's costs if the Council rejects the final development proposal - although the Council can tell the DDA not to go forward with the process at any time prior to bringing the proposal to Council.

If you want to know more about the resolution, here's a link to the Council's agenda and the text of the resolution:

[http://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?](http://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=827135&GUID=474CD839-914F-4A22-BC2F-5CC73AB13576&Options=&Search)

[ID=827135&GUID=474CD839-914F-4A22-BC2F-5CC73AB13576&Options=&Search](http://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=827135&GUID=474CD839-914F-4A22-BC2F-5CC73AB13576&Options=&Search)

If you have questions or comments about any issue on the agenda, please let me

know.



Talking about the Budget

The Council has held working sessions about the budget and received preliminary ideas from the staff about how they recommend meeting the budget targets. Each year since I've been on Council (it's only three years!) the information available becomes more extensive. That doesn't mean it's any easier for you or me to deal with.

Here's a link to all the information I've seen on the budget so far:
<http://www.a2gov.org/government/financeadminservices/budgetguide/Pages/BudgetPublicProcess.aspx>

This information is not the final word. Right now the City is still trying to determine what the changes in the State's budget mean to Ann Arbor. The staff is also looking at ways to continue to provide all the services that Ann Arbor has been providing. Sometimes that means moving responsibilities and staff around; sometimes the recommendation is to eliminate positions. I'm certainly not happy with the idea of eliminating positions. And I don't want to see services cut, although I'd rather be honest, and just eliminate a service instead of



On the horizon

There are a number of upcoming issues you might find important. On Tuesday, March 8th the RFP Advisory Committee for the Library Lot is scheduled to meet. I don't have the location yet, but will be before Tuesday. This meeting is not posted on the City's website as of Saturday, March 5th. If you are interested in attending or learning more, please let me know.

There may be a working session on the Library Lot RFP on Monday, March 14. Last Wednesday, March 2nd, I was told this meeting would be cancelled. However, if the Advisory Committee meets, the working session to brief Council may continue to be on the schedule. If so, this will be properly posted.

The Street Outreach (panhandling) Task Force will report to

provide really bad service.
Many of you gave me feedback on
budget priorities in the last few
years:

Safety Services
Streets & Bridges
Parks
Solid Waste/Compost/Recycling
Water
Human Services

Are these still your priorities?

Council on March 21.

The Fuller Road Transit Station continues to be in discussion. At the Council's dinner with the Regents, Mary Sue Coleman praised the design of this 'parking structure' and spoke about its value to the University. The Mayor was quick to point out afterward that its real value is as a transit station.

Roger Fraser, the City's Administrator, has resigned, effective April 29. He's going to work for the Rick Snyder administration. I'm reasonably confident this resignation will result in some changes at City Hall. I won't speculate about them, but look forward to seeing what happens. Mr. Fraser will stay through the budget creation process, but will leave just after he presents the budget. Council members will confront any adjustments to the budget without his support or advice.

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Sabra Briere, Ann Arbor City City Council · 1418 Broadway · Ann Arbor, MI 48105

