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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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*"Listening in deliberation is crucial but insufficient, for if listening does not lead to subsequent action, to the possibility that what is heard can actually **make a difference**, then such listening becomes merely condescension, wasting or manipulating others' time, an act less of taking the other seriously than of insulting them by failing to respond to their deeply held concerns."*

The Deliberate Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Process, by John F. Foster, 1999

Dear Neighbors,

This week we had snow, but not a lot. We may have rain next week, we certainly did last week. And while it's chilly today, the forecast predicts warm weather for tomorrow. Few things are as reliable as Michigan weather.

I trust your week has been busy. I know mine has.

On the Agenda

There are lots of places you can turn to get opinions about local issues. We all have opinions. Part of my job, as I see it, is to provide information; that's why I send these updates.

The 4-party agreement for transit

The agreement (as a resolution) is on the [Agenda](#) for Monday, January 23rd. There will be a public hearing, beginning some time after 7:30 pm.

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(Public Comment and other actions take a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting.)

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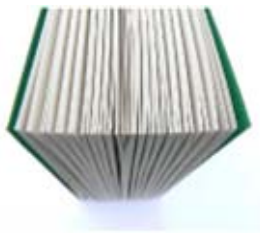


Coffee wakes some of us up

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.



I spent much of Saturday going through all the information I had, writing a [briefing paper](#) on the proposed 4-Party Agreement that would establish a process for creating a regional transit system to replace AATA. If you are concerned about this proposed agreement, I hope you'll read through the paper. (It has links to other documents.)

If you don't have time to get through the paper, here's a [set of maps](#) I extracted from the Transit Master Plan, the [Master Plan](#) itself, and the [text of the current resolution](#). There are a number of [possible amendments to the resolution](#) that I have already received. (Amendments are made from the floor; other amendments are possible.) While the resolution -- if amended as I anticipate it will be -- only requires that the residents of Ann Arbor (and the residents of the transit district, as a whole) must vote to approve the [funding source](#), a new transit authority cannot be established and *begin operating* unless the funding source is approved; that won't result in any change for Ann Arbor unless a majority of Ann Arbor voters approve the funding source.

AATA established an interim New Transit Authority Board and a Financial Advisory Group. The Financial Advisory Group should provide a recommendation for a 'funding source' at their next meeting, January 27th. Although the Council will hold the public hearing on the 23rd, I hope the members of Council will agree to postpone any decision until at least the February 6th regular Council meeting, so we may all evaluate the proposed funding source.

Other Resolutions

Two resolutions on the Agenda have implications that are larger than Ann Arbor alone.

A resolution opposing PA 297 and supporting actions to preserve equal benefits is focused on the Governor's decision to sign legislation prohibiting local governments from providing dependent benefits to unmarried couples. You may have read that this act saves local municipalities significant dollars. NINE employees' / retirees' lives are affected; four of those have same-sex partners, as far as the City knows. And while that's not many affected lives, it's also not a significant budget impact.

A resolution opposing increased immigration enforcement and

What am I reading?

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supporting immigrant families is a response to continued efforts to deport local residents who have not committed a felony, have deep ties to

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

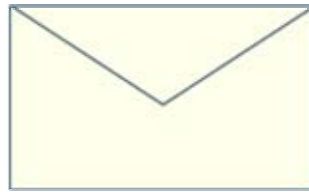
Here's my current and recent reading list:

Traffic, by Tom Vanderbilt. I read about this book in one of the Ann Arbor Chronicle's comments; I've found this well-written book to be worth the wait from the library. I'm not yet ready to own, but I may get there quickly.

The Invisible Gorilla, by Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simmons. This book goes well with **Thinking Fast and Slow** and **Being Wrong**.

our community, and are considered 'low-priority cases' based on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) policies. Many of these residents have minor, US-born children.

There are always other items on the Agenda. Please let me know what concerns you about any agenda item.



Mail and calls

Many of you have contacted me about the proposed 4-party agreement.

One of our neighbors wrote because utility workers left an orange barrel orphaned in her neighborhood (taken care of!). I met with a neighborhood representative about sidewalks, streets, and speeds. I heard from several folks about mistimed stop lights (information given to the City).

I continued to hear about graffiti and vandalism in the downtown. I learned that the police were out in force last week to address



Care to participate?

Take the [Public Art Survey!](#)

This survey doesn't address funding for public art, but there are opportunities for comment. The survey is focused on where and what type of public art our community wants.

On the horizon

The City's Fire Chief and members of the fire department will present the ICMA study on the fire department plus their suggestions, ideas and reactions at the February working session (Feb 13th). At least, that's how it looked on Friday when I met with Fire Chief Hubbard and Police Chief Jones.

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concerns about panhandlers
on State Street.
I reminded one staff
member that our goal is to
solve problems, not cause
them. If you have a
problem, please let me
know.

The City hopes to hire additional
police officers before July
Preference will go toward those
who were laid off. Other staffing
ideas -- staffing improvements
and staffing levels -- are being
discussed. The Mayor and the
Chief Finance Office (Tom
Crawford) believe the economic
picture is rosy enough that there
will be no forced staff reductions
next fiscal year. And that's good
news.

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