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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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Survey Survey Survey

Dear neighbors,

You may have noticed that there's a *survey* linked to this report.

Some issues continue to simmer – transportation and the budget, for instance. I'm looking for some feedback from you on both issues. I've [updated my briefing paper](#) on the 4-party agreement (I haven't yet written something about the train station, but that item isn't on the Agenda).

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I'd encourage you to read the paper before you take the [survey](#), but that's just because it may answer some questions.

You might also have heard that the Chief of Police, Barnett Jones, recently announced his retirement. I'm very sorry to have him retire. Not only do I think he's a bit young (who counts 40 years on the job?), but we started working at the City in the same year.

I'm a product of the 60s and 70s, and would never say that I'm consistently in favor of lawyers or police officers. I had a real 'show-me' predisposition. Chief Jones showed me – he showed me that he understood Ann Arbor, that he'd tell me what he believed to be the truth, and that he'd listen to my concerns. When I asked for police presence in anyone's neighborhood, he listened and helped



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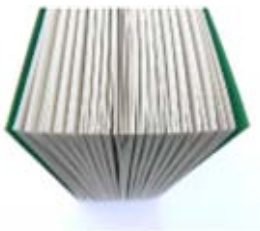
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Coffee wakes some of us up

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.



solve the problems. I really appreciate his service.

On Friday I attended the latest 'swearing-in' for a new police officer. (Yes, we're hiring!) I asked Chief Jones why he was retiring and he said that he felt he'd really helped turn around the police department, that the community and the police were working well together, that his deputy chiefs were really well trained and well prepared to continue his work, and that he wanted to go out on a high note. He didn't voice any complaint about the way the police department had been treated – he said it was a pleasure working with the Council.

He leaves in April. His deputy chiefs, John Seto and Greg Bazick, will serve as interims until a decision is made about a new Chief.

On the Agenda

Ordinances, Second (final) Reading

The City Council will vote on whether to amend the construction code to reflect the new flood-plain map. Here's a [link to the map](#) – and keep in mind that, if you want, you can save or print specific views.

I've attached maps of my [neighborhood](#) and the [depot street areas](#), just so you can see what the maps show.

A related item is a resolution to [adopt and administer minimum floodplain development regulations](#) – a FEMA requirement for communities like ours that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Ordinances, First Reading

The City Council will hear a [proposed amendment to the "landscape buffer"](#) language in Chapter 62 of the City Code. Here's the staff's explanation of the proposed change:

"Conflicting Land Use Buffers - When recent amendments were made to Chapter 62, they included a new provision to require properties in R3 (Townhouse Dwelling) and R4

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(Multiple-Family Dwelling) districts to provide a conflicting and **RSS** buffer along **translate** side and rear **3** property line. **f** Like 0 C

when the parcel abuts properties principally used or zoned residential. The intent of the recent amendments was to provide a landscaping buffer when new residential projects on large tracts of land were proposed next to established residential neighborhoods.

While browsing for something else, I found [The Localization Reader: Adapting to the Coming Downshift](#), edited by Raymond De Young and Thomas Princen. You might know these guys – both are UM faculty members in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment (SNRE). I made a point of asking to meet, and spent an enlightening hour-plus talking with Dr. DeYoung. There are several good things about this book, but I was particularly attracted because proceeds are given to Growing Hope and The Food Co-Op.

Sometimes people send me emails that are pertinent to an issue. I frequently store those and, as the issue continues to generate discussion, I return and read older correspondence. That's the case with a message from one of our neighbors, who steered me toward a **1979-1980 committee report** which led to the location of the current Amtrak station. This report was prepared by Pollack Design Associates (Peter Pollack was very involved in Ann Arbor until his untimely passing).

It took the staff a little time to find this report, but they made me a (paper) copy. So I'm reading The Ann Arbor Depot, which includes a listing of alternative sites considered for a depot – including the currently proposed Fuller Road site.

“This amendment would remove the R4C zoning district from adhering to the recent conflicting land use buffer requirement. R4C sites are typically located on small lots in older neighborhoods near downtown. Most R4C lots are too small to accommodate a 15 foot wide conflicting land use buffer along the entire side and rear property lines. Additionally, the conflicting land use buffer is more appropriately applied to large tracts of land in suburban locations and not consistent with the urban character of R4C neighborhoods.”

The City recently confronted the landscape buffer issue with regard to revisions to the site plan for **City Place**, a project being built in an R4C zoning district on land combining 7 different lots.

Resolutions

Old Business: The City Council postponed voting on the 4-party transit agreement on February 6th. The expectation was that the Financial Advisory Group would provide a report on exactly how the expanded transit system would be funded, and from which sources. The [report](#) is now available, but it doesn't answer these questions.

I've updated my [briefing paper](#) on the 4-party agreement with current information. If you are interested, you can read this before you take the [survey](#).

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New Business: The Council will consider a [resolution](#) to purchase property at the corner of Kingsley and First. This property (215 & 219 W. Kingsley) is in the floodway and is frequently affected by heavy rains. The house has

Imagine my surprise!

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been abandoned. The City would like to acquire this land, razed house, and a flood mitigation train garden to help with Allen Creek flooding. Funding for this purchase (\$185,000) would come from a FEMA grant for pre-disaster mitigation. (The house has suffered significant flood damage.) Sandi Smith is sponsoring this resolution.

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. I go to almost all Caucus meetings.

The Council will also consider a [resolution](#) that requires the City Attorney to delay enforcement of the licensing and zoning ordinances related to medical marijuana until after the Council has an opportunity to approve amendments recommended by the licensing board. I sit as a member of the licensing board and am the sponsor of this resolution.

Of course, there's other business to conduct. The City Council will vote on street closings, contracts for parks improvements, and liquor licenses. The Council may approve funding for Dexter Avenue improvements. I only highlight a few issues. Here's a link to the entire [agenda](#).



Talking about the Budget

The Council will hold its second working session related to the budget on March 12th. The presentation will focus on fire services and a possible renewal of the Parks millage. Another item on that working



Taking a walk

Last week I offered to take a walk with Council member Anglin or anyone else who wants to see the location of the current Amtrak station and wants to consider other possible locations. I have such a walk scheduled for March 16 (Friday) at 2:00 pm. We'll be meeting at the current station on Depot. I've invited staff

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session agenda is likely to be
the Mission site cleanup

The final (proposed) budget
will be presented on May 14th
at a working session.

members to come along to help
me explain the stuff I'm not
technologically trained for.

Would you like to join us? Would
you want to set a different time?
Just let me know, and I'll work
with you on that tour.

Care to participate?

The DDA has been tasked with
the responsibility to create a plan
for five (5) City-owned lots in the
downtown (called the Connecting
William Street project). They
have created a [survey](#) to gather
feedback – and there are spaces
to comment, if you don't like the
choices.

On March 15th the City staff will
again meet with residents
concerned about Newport Road
to discuss options for pedestrian,
bike and road improvements.

Here's the [announcement](#).

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