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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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## Sabra Briere

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Dear neighbors,

It's been an unusual spring. Tornadoes and heavy rain on Thursday, fog today, and through it all the unexpected bloom of daffodils (in all the years I've live here, I've never had daffodils before March 17th!). I'm anticipating April, when the City starts picking up compostables again. I've been saving all of my vegetable trimmings, coffee grounds and egg shells since last December. I will add the cut-up Christmas tree and the evergreen branches that remain from the holidays. I've already cleaned up 13 bags of winter debris. Compost will be available starting in April -- and the first Saturday (April 7) is also the first day you can pick up your free cubic yard of compost or mulch.

Did you know that the City is updating its Solid Waste Plan? The Environmental Commission is looking at our current trash, recycle and compost practices, and has begun the discussion of what recommendations should be included in the revisions. I've learned that Single Stream recycling has been so effective that actual trash has been greatly reduced. I've also learned that I can add cooked vegetable waste to my compost bin.

The committee is even discussing ways to compost plate scrapings. It turns out that a major component of the trash we throw away is really food. Finding a way to pick up that food and compost it is a challenge. (The compost operation has been avoiding meat and fats for years because 'windrows' don't break down the proteins and fats well.)

I've also learned that the various committees have talked about ways to continue to provide services while saving dollars. One way proposed is to reduce trash pickup to every other week.

Recycle Bank provides points for every time a cart is at the curb – whether it's full or it has nothing in it, just putting the cart at the curb is enough. So

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there's an incentive to put that cart out weekly (note: I don't use Recycle Bank). I'm not impressed by this - if it saves the City, (and therefore you and me) dollars to pick up those carts less frequently, I think we can manage that by ourselves.

## 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.

Every time a truck stops to pick up the trash, recycle or compost cart, it adds to the cost. If we put our carts out only when they are full, we would all spend less to have the carts emptied. The proposed option relates only to trash; recycle carts are not affected. However, the Solid Waste committee has considered two options for compost: picking it up year-round or reducing frequency during the summer.

So I want to know: Are you like me? Do you put the carts at the curb only when they are full? Or do you take it to the curb every week, even if it's almost empty?

Some of you responded to my latest survey, which focused on transit and the budget. I've created a [report](#) but, for those who don't have time to read my ponderous prose, here's some basic results.

**84%** of those who answered the survey want to ensure that the transit system is available for neighborhood routes and to provide services to seniors and the handicapped.

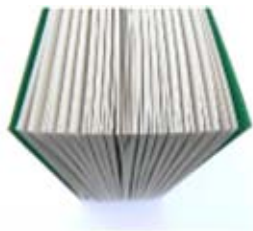
**78%** would support some form of transit system that provides services to Washtenaw County, as they see a benefit to Ann Arbor.

**48%** support building a new train / multi-modal station on Fuller Road (**38%** want no change).

and

**62%** want the City to hire more staff to improve the service level.

[\(click for larger image\)](#)



## What am I reading?

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Increase the Fund Balance reserves

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62%

Hire more staff to return to prior service

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So much to read, so little time.

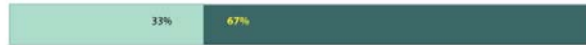
I've focused on sustainability for light reading during past few days.

I'm also reading about journalism in the age of electronic communication: [The business of media: A Survival Guide](#) by

*Larry Dignan*. Maybe this will help me with both surveys and newsletters.



Parks look ragged. Improve the parks



Community support for those in need.



Cut the administration and add staff and services.



Here's the [whole survey report](#), but if you want the raw data, you'll have to ask.

## On the Agenda

### 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.

This week the agenda is fairly light.

## Ordinance and Public Hearing

There will be a public hearing on an ordinance to [rezone Les Voyageurs](#) (on the corner of Longshore opposite Argo Park entry) from PL (Public Land) to PUD (Planned Unit Development). This rezoning, if approved, will not result in any change in use at this site. It will allow for some minor modifications to the building that exceed the current zoning.

### Ordinance, First Reading

The Council postponed the first reading of an ordinance that would [change the landscaping and screening requirements for new construction](#). This item is on this agenda.

The Council will consider - in one reading - an ordinance to [issue and sell bonds to re-fund Water Supply bonds](#). (Re-funding is like re-financing.) An additional ordinance change results in changes to the retirement system. These benefit changes affect the contracts that the Council will consider (as part of the RESOLUTION section) for the [Fire staff](#) and the [Command Officers \(Police Department\)](#).

## Resolutions

### Council originated resolutions

The Council postponed voting on a resolution to clarify the role of the City Attorney with regard to enforcement of the [licensing and zoning ordinances about medical marijuana](#). This resolution returns to the agenda.

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The Council will consider a [resolution](#) about grass clippings and other yard waste. The House and Senate in Lansing are considering the re-evaluation of a ban on adding yard waste to the landfill.

**Staff originated resolutions**

The Council will consider requests to purchase 4 new police vehicles from three different vendors as well as a new street sweeper.

**Boards and Commission originated resolutions**

The purchase of development rights (PDR) for those properties identified by the Greenbelt Commission continues. By purchasing development rights, the City - in collaboration with state, national and non-profit funding sources - is able to help farmers remain on the land. The City's contribution toward each PDR uses dedicated funds from the Open Space and Parkland Preservation millage.

**Minutes and communications**

One of our neighbors asked about some missing minutes of the Market Commission. Those [minutes](#) are attached to this agenda. Of course, there are some other items on the agenda - a street closing, a renewal of the BCBS contract for employee benefits . . . Here's a [link](#) to see it all.



**Talking about the Budget**

The Council will hear from the DDA about their budget on April 9th. The draft budget will be presented to Council and the public in mid-April. The final (proposed) budget will be presented on May 14th at a working session. The official talk - until the City Administrator presents the budget - is that we continue



**A walk along Depot**

Last week about 25 residents took a walk to look at the Amtrak parking lot (off Broadway), the current Depot site, and the Broadway bridges. Several members of the City staff came along to explain their view of how useable this land was for a new transit station, and to provide answers to questions. There were

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to consider staffing levels as

part of the budget package.

Unofficially, many Council members and members of the public have been encouraging the City Administrator to find creative ways to increase staffing levels where possible. The City is currently hiring more police officers. No budget details were included in the Fire Department's presentation last week. We were told that all ladder trucks are in operation, and that the City has funding for a new Tower Truck. I'd like to see those purchases sooner than later. The Council also learned about a planned reorganization of the fire department to focus more on getting fire fighters to fires quickly, and less on getting to medical emergencies quickly. If the City Administrator approves this change, I anticipate other changes at Huron Valley Ambulance in order to maintain services for us all.

no handouts, but the staff have a good idea of putting the maps and other documents on the City's [Fuller Road Station](#) web page. (As I write this, I'll point out that the web page has not been updated. I hope it will be quickly.)

I'm happy to organize another walk, if you missed this one. Just let me know, and I'll work with you on that tour.

### Care to participate?

The City has been hosting a series of fora on sustainability. To that end, you are invited to attend a [public meeting](#) to help refine the City's sustainability goals. It's March 29th from 6 pm to 8 pm in the 4th floor meeting space at the downtown library.

Leslie Park Golf Course is scheduled to open Tuesday, March 20th. Weather permitting, of course.

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**On March 15th the City staff met with residents concerned about possible changes to**

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Newport Road. The staff presented an option to build a pedestrian and bike path adjacent to Newport on the city's right of way. This construction would be part of a larger project that involves resurfacing Newport Road. If you want to know more, or have questions or suggestions, please contact [me, Sandi Smith](#) and/or [Homayoon Pirooz](#), the Project Management manager.

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