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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

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Dear neighbors,

A couple of weeks ago my father died. It's not a tragedy - the photo above was taken in 1999, and shows him at 86. Last September he turned 97. In the last 11 years his interest in national and local politics didn't fail, but it did slow down. So did everything else -- his speech, his reading, his mobility, and his desire to garden. I spent last week rescuing some of the flowers you can see in this photo, still growing strongly although they were neglected while my father planned his next big project. I was on this rescue mission rather than updating you on the issues facing Council tonight. Sometimes personal issues take precedence.

My father was a big believer in gardening without pesticides or herbicides. After he retired, he stopped planting vegetables and planted only flowers -- and even after nearly a decade of neglect, many of those flowers still thrive. If your garden would benefit from some natural fertilizer, I recommend compost for the soil, and mulch to keep the weeds in check.

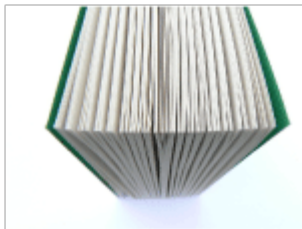
If you want to purchase compost or mulch, you can get it for 1/2 price if you've signed up for the Recyclebank program (at [www.recyclebank.com](http://www.recyclebank.com)). Compost and mulch are on sale starting in April for \$15/cubic yard. You can also get free compost any Saturday in April (with your water bill). For more information, click: [Compost](#)

## Help select the City Administrator

You may have heard that the City Administrator has resigned to take a new position with the Snyder administration in Lansing. Tomorrow (Tuesday, May 3rd),

## Coffee wakes some of us up

For the last three weeks I've been holding office hours (7:30 to 9 on Mondays at the Northside Grill). I've talked with people about the Library Lot project, street resurfacing, union contracts (I'm not on that committee), and the weather. No one likes the weather. Recently I was joined by an AATA board member, who showed up for coffee and breakfast, and stayed to talk about the AATA budget. I just never know what will happen. When I have a quiet moment, I work on Council business -- and, of course, I eat breakfast. The Northside Grill should benefit, since I'm occupying their booth. They have French Roast and are polite. They 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.



## What am I reading?

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:

two meetings are scheduled at the County Administration Building, 200 N. Main, lower level conference room.

- 6 p.m. Meeting with representatives from businesses
- 7 p.m. Public Meeting

The meetings outlined above will give business owners and the public the opportunity to give feedback regarding the new city administrator's role and responsibilities as identified in the City Charter. The City Administrator job description can be downloaded from the city's homepage at [www.a2gov.org](http://www.a2gov.org). In addition, you can e-mail questions about stakeholder meetings to [stakeholder\\_meeting@a2gov.org](mailto:stakeholder_meeting@a2gov.org).

In June, onsite public interviews with selected candidates will be scheduled. Specific dates will be announced on the city's website at [www.a2gov.org](http://www.a2gov.org).

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## Wild life

At a recent neighborhood meeting I heard concerns about coyote. I haven't seen any coyote, but I have great photos of deer in my front yard. Many of us live with ducks, geese, rabbits, skunks, woodchucks, and other uninvited visitors and wild neighbors. Some are less-than-pleasant company.

As much as I enjoy living near wildlife, I want to coexist peacefully. One of the best ways to do that in an urban landscape is to resist feeding them -- don't leave out pet food, for instance. If you need to discourage coyote, keep your trash secured (you already do this because of the racoons, don't you?). For deer, I use one of several deer-repellants on my tulips and I've learned that they get used to things, so I change some stuff around. A whirligig or other moving garden decoration discourages deer and many birds. Nets over fruit trees and berry bushes are effective, if you want fruit.

Skunks are decorative neighbors, but not ones I want to get to know well. They and the woodchucks live in brush piles or under porches. If you don't want these neighbors moving in with you, sometimes you need to secure your yard by changing your yard to make it less attractive.

I borrowed a book from the library (The Humane Control of Wildlife in Cities and Towns) to learn more about what I could do in my yard. I didn't find a single good resource on the web, but this book worked well for me.

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## Sidewalks, Streets and Roads

How Cities Work: suburbs, sprawl, and the roads not taken

Pocket guide to the humane control of wildlife in cities & towns

The future of local government in Michigan : symposium proceedings

The latest statistics from Lansing show that 35% of all roads in Michigan are in poor condition, and only 18% are in good condition (2010 data). Those of us who drive anywhere won't be surprised by this information. If roads are in bad shape, it's because there isn't enough funding to keep them in good repair. The same seems to be true for our local streets. This year's budget for street maintenance is about \$9,397,000 (\$7,619,000 for major streets; \$1,778,000 for local streets). But it's been a rough winter, I guess, since the streets are filled with potholes and some streets need to be completely rebuilt.

Spring Street, for instance, requires a significant reconstruction. It's not in the Capital Improvement Plan, at least, not as far as I can see. But the repair to Spring Street is still scheduled to begin this month, and will include reconstructing the street's substructure as well as resurfacing it. While I might like to see innovative solutions for what is clearly an issue with drainage, I'm just looking forward to a long-term solution, however it can be managed.

The Streets Millage will be on the ballot in November. One proposal from the City this budget cycle has been to add a millage for sidewalk maintenance. I started promoting this idea in 2007, so I'm happy to have some support for it. I believe each of us may have spent enough in the past few years bringing our sidewalks into repair. Now, it should be up to the City to maintain them by hiring a contractor to keep them to one standard. I'm certain we'll hear more about this idea from the City as they work out the details. I just hope it looks as good on paper as it seems in my head.

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## On the Agenda

Tonight's agenda may not be as full as it looks right now. Late breaking information about the DDA's financial situation (click [here](#) and [here](#)) will change the nature of the discussion regarding the parking contract and the financial arrangements between the City and the DDA. I just don't know how things will change.

## The Budget -- fees, human services

Fees for parks users, construction and building, planning and development, and rental inspections will all be discussed tonight. There are public hearings on these issues.

Another public hearing is on funding for human services. The budget proposes cutting about \$117,000 from funding for human services. While this cut won't result in elimination of programs, it will reduce the amounts available to those programs that receive funding from Ann Arbor. These programs provide services to residents of Ann Arbor at a variety of age and income levels. Making these cuts will be difficult. The City staff have not offered options.

## Packard Square Site Plan and Brownfield Plan

This project is up for approval -- two items, both single vote.



### Talking about the Budget

The Council will vote on the budget on Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup>. Between tonight and then, several issues must be resolved. Paramount is the relationship between the DDA and the City in handling parking. The City has grown dependent on the funds from the parking system; the DDA seeks more responsibility if they are going to be providing an increased amount of funding to the City from parking revenue.



### Election Day - are you voting?

Tuesday, May 3 is election day. On the ballot is a renewal of the Washtenaw Intermediate School millage. This millage funds special education in every public school in Washtenaw County. You may want to save dollars, or may think you'll be sending a valuable lesson to the Ann Arbor public schools if you vote NO on the millage.

You've probably already heard this, but just in case -- special education must be provided. There's no option. So if the millage doesn't pay

Parking is handled under contract by the DDA; it's not part of their mandate.

There are other outstanding issues, of course. How many jobs will remain in the budget -- and what will they be doing? Will the Council take the staff's advice, and place an emphasis on projects over people?

How many police and fire fighters are 'enough'?

Here's a link to all the information from the City that I've seen on the budget:

[Budget pages](#)

for it, local school systems will. Any funds not available through with WISD come from your local school -- and that hurts all the students, not the teachers, administrators, or school board.

I'm voting. I hope to see you at the polls tomorrow!

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