

[Subscribe to List](#)[View Past Issues](#)[RSS](#)[translate](#)

+1



Like

C

A number of updates and what's on the Agenda

[Friend on Facebook](#)[Follow on Twitter](#)[Forward to a Friend](#)

## Sabra Briere

First Ward, City Council

[sbriere@A2gov.org](mailto:sbriere@A2gov.org)

[sabra.briere@gmail.com](mailto:sabra.briere@gmail.com)

995-3518 (home)

277-6578 (cell)

[sabrabriere.org](http://sabrabriere.org)

Dear neighbors,

It's September. I still think about paper, pens, new books and new clothes at the start of a new school year. Instead, I have been surprised by my need to interact with the school system about student safety.

If you no longer have a student in the public schools, you could have easily missed much of the budget discussions that have gone on over the past few years. The State has cut the per-pupil allotment significantly. This has resulted to a budget decrease of over \$50 million – and \$15 million just this year.

Nobody likes to work in a time of budget decreases.

The school system devised a series of changes in the way it operates in order to address this shortfall. I'm not going to discuss those changes – contact members of the [School Board](#) to ask them questions. But I do want to address the way the decision to significantly reduce busing (at a savings of over \$1 million to the schools) can impact the City of Ann Arbor.

**I've asked for a complete listing of all 'safe walks' that the school system has identified.** I've met with School Board members and talked with City and School staff. This isn't just a problem the schools are having; it's a community problem.

Subscribe to List

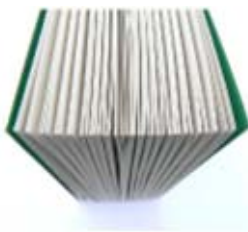
View Past Issues



## Coffee wakes some of us up

I hold office hours 7:30 to 9 am most Mondays at the Northside Grill., but this week Monday is Labor Day. I'll be there on Tuesday instead.

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.



## 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:

In the past, although the school system asserted that students would be bused if they resided over 1.5 miles from their school, that policy was not consistently followed. Neighborhoods where students had to cross the street without traffic controls but that were less than 1.5 miles from the school were frequently bused. Now the school system is requiring all elementary school students to walk (or find other transportation) to school if they fall within that 1.5 mile radius – and they aren't being flexible about applying that. If you live at the extreme end of that radius – or maybe just a little outside it, depending on the person measuring – you will need to find other transportation for your elementary school student. If you live with students in high school, the school staff believes you should remember to be grateful that there are buses at all, as the staff recommended eliminating busing for high school students.

According to the school system, it's the responsibility of the parent/guardian to get the child to school. Contact members of the [School Board](#) to share your views on this decision.

### How does this affect the City?

I'm pretty certain you will expect the City to ensure that pedestrian crossings are safe and well-lit. Making changes to the infrastructure for these crosswalks wasn't in this year's budget. You will expect the City to maintain the public walks – plowing them during the winter. Making a priority of clearing snow from walks through parks also wasn't in the budget. You may also expect the City to encourage property owners to clear their sidewalks earlier in the day, as waiting 24 hours to shovel will significantly affect elementary school students.

Some people may want to increase the number crossing guards. Some people may demand increased police presence, especially since high school students have to catch buses shortly after 6 am, which means that – if they walk to their bus stops – they may have to leave home by 5:15 or 5:30 am.

What does it cost to make these 'safe walks' safe? An overhead [Pedestrian Crossing] sign that lights up to alert drivers would cost about \$25,000 – not counting any infrastructure work. Installing additional lighting in areas previously unlighted (such as walks through parks, which the school system has included in their 'safe walks' routes) would cost more, but an estimate is pending.

0  
Like C

I have learned a lot in the last

[Subscribe to List](#)

[View Past Issues](#)

[RSS](#)

[translate](#)



+1



Like

C

week about school safety walk zones.

I've continued reading about statistics and the best way to evaluate problems when there isn't enough information (***The Theory that would not die: How Bayes Rule cracked the Enigma Code, hunted down Russian submarines, and emerged triumphant from two centuries of controversy, by Sharon McGrayne.***

***The Gated City***, an article by Ryan Avent, who writes for the Economist. (His premise is ***more density*** will solve economic, environmental and cultural problems.)

And if you didn't pick it up, the September ***Scientific American*** has devoted the issue to ***Cities***. Lots to read there.

I'm not certain what other expenses might become desirable.

While the school system may amend its policy this year, the economic situation for schools isn't expected to improve next year. So the City needs to understand how school decisions will impact City budget decisions and priorities.

### And considering unforeseen expenses:

The reconstruction of Plymouth Park wetlands is still pending approval from the State. You may remember that this area was the scene of a major mud slide that left the Ann Arbor Railroad tracks hanging in midair last May. The park (which is on both sides of Plymouth Road near Broadway and Maiden Lane) has been unusable since, with raw dirt showing on one side, and water runoff eroding the banks of Traver Creek on the other.

There have been some other incidents. The heavy rains this summer caused water and more mud to slide out onto Plymouth Road, and also caused a temporary culvert near Traver Creek to be washed out. Although there's a silt fence near the playground, there's been more sediment than the fence can contain. As a result, the City plans to temporarily install a new connection from the drainage pipe under the railroad to the drain under Plymouth Road; the entire wetland reconstruction should start next spring (2012). The cost for reconstruction and repair is still unknown, but will affect various construction budgets and possibly the parks budget.

**As a point of good news**, the Michigan Department of Environment Quality (MDEQ) issued the permit for the City to start reconstructing the Argo headrace on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Since then, the contractor has begun grading the headrace and has completed rough grading for approximately 1/8th of the distance. The contractor has also a system that will complete the dewatering. The City is working with Recreational Engineering out of Colorado to ensure that the local limestone is acceptable for use. The stone should begin to arrive on site next week. At that time, construction will begin on the first drop in the headrace. Work should be substantially complete by November 15, as required by the agreement with the State of Michigan.

In addition to receiving the permit, the State accepted the City's

[Subscribe to List](#)
[View Past Issues](#)

proposal to deregulate the headrace embankment. This means that the City will not repair the toe gains in the deregulated portion of the embankment (and that was the premise behind the proposed improvements).

## About the Street /Bridge and Sidewalk millages.

Every time I receive information from the City about the way the City has spent millage money, and the way it plans to spend money for street and bridge maintenance and for sidewalk maintenance, I end up with more questions.

I voted to place both of these millages on the ballot (the vote was unanimous). Although I have been asking a lot of questions, at heart I believe that the street millage is a significant benefit to the City. I also believe that the sidewalk millage should have been offered to us when the street millage was last renewed (in 2006). The application of the sidewalk repair ordinance has always seemed to me to be arbitrary and inconsistent.

However, I have been concerned about the way the City has accounted for the millage dollars. I know that the City decided to reduce its spending on street maintenance during the last couple of years in order to have sufficient funds to replace the Stadium Bridges – in case the federal dollars didn't come through. But now we have the commitment for the federal dollars, and we need to spend the money.

I've received a [report](#) on the current Street Millage, and how the money has been spent (and on which streets). This millage is used to leverage additional funds (the necessary matching funds for state and federal grants). Because I'm still not satisfied with my own knowledge, I've asked more questions. In the meantime, I plan to bring a **Resolution of Intent** to Council at the September 19<sup>th</sup> meeting that will, I hope, clarify how the millage dollars will be spent, accounted for, and allocated.

---

## On the Agenda

**Lansdown Pedestrian Bridge:** There's a resolution on the Agenda to increase the budget by \$120,000 (it requires 8 votes) in order to replace a pedestrian bridge in Lansdown (the Fourth Ward). The money would be allocated from the Major Streets Fund

[Subscribe to List](#)
[View Past Issues](#)
[RSS](#)
[translate](#)

[+1](#)

[Like](#)
[C](#)

(not the same as the Street Repair Millage).

**The Kiwanis Club** would like to lease a portion of 415 W.

Washington (the former County Garage, across the street from the YMCA, in the Fifth Ward). They need additional storage, and the plans for using 415 W. Washington for the arts and greenway have still not been approved. The lease price (month to month) would be \$100. Because this is additional income, it also requires 8 votes.

Sometimes houses are built in the wrong place. That's the case with **5 W. Eden Court** (in the Third Ward). This property was built in an area with inadequate drainage; a lot of the surface water from the subdivision flows directly to this property. The City proposes buying the property, demolishing the house, and creating open space that will deal appropriately with the water. Because it's a purchase, the budget must be reopened in order to allocate the \$82,500 requested. The money needed is in the Open Space and Parkland Preservation millage budget.

#### **The City asks to amend its contract for street**

**resurfacing** to add more streets to the street resurfacing program for 2011. The contract would be increased by \$550,040. There's an entire list of projects under way or completed [here](#). The funds for this project come from a variety of sources, including the Street Repair Millage.

**Grant Agreements:** The City has received two grants and asks the Council to approve them. One of the grants is for \$7,500.00 to perform a preliminary engineering study for Gallup Park boating access site improvements. The other is for \$273,083.40, which will pay for 90% of the costs to complete the application for a loan under the State Revolving Fund (SRF) program to finance the Facilities Renovations Project (FRP) at the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The City Council previously approved a budget for applying for the loan.

#### **Reports and Resolutions from committees and**

**commissions:** The Agenda always includes space for reports and resolutions from committees and commissions. This week there are two that you might want to see: a [resolution](#) from PAC regarding hiking and biking trail improvements adjacent to Fuller Road and the [annual report](#) of the Public Arts Commission.

Subscribe to List

View Past Issues

To see the entire agenda [translate here.](#)



+1



Like

C



## Stadium Bridges

Construction on the Stadium Bridges is scheduled to begin this fall. I don't yet have an exact date, but the City says it will begin in October.

I've heard from some people that they doubt the federal dollars for this project have been allocated. The City staff tell me that they have, and that the City will be reimbursed as the project continues -- that the federal government doesn't give the money up front, but reimburses expenses.

I have asked about safe routes to school (Pioneer, in particular) as well as what the effect of construction will be on traffic patterns along State Street and detours. To see the recommended E. Stadium Boulevard detour route, click [here](#). To see the



## On The Horizon

### Football and Event Traffic

You may have heard that the City Council voted to require payment for services from the University for traffic control on game days and for other events. For years, the City has been providing this service for free. The University disputed the amount the City sought, and offered a lesser amount for lesser service. This is what we have -- the lights for incoming traffic will not be adjusted as effectively as in the past; all of Main Street will be one-way outbound after games and events. It's not what anyone wanted, but it's more in the City's coffers than before -- and the University is paying for it.



### Idling Ordinance

I've heard from a number of folks who were misled by AnnArbor.com, and believed that the Council had already voted to give tickets to idling

Subscribe to List

View Past Issues

recommended S. State Street  
detail RSS  
route click [here](#) translate

cars. The Council hasn't  
seen  is proposed ord  nced  
0  
Like C

yet; I don't know when or if it will be on the Agenda.

The Council received a report from a committee (the Environmental Commission) that recommended such an ordinance, and that included a draft ordinance for Council to consider. By mistake, this report was (very briefly) placed as an action item. It was moved to the correct agenda location (written reports from the City Administrator) but the confusion had already begun.

I'm happy to hear what you think of this proposed ordinance, now or at any time.

### Speed limit changes

The City is conducting traffic studies on several streets. These studies are required because the City is evaluating the current speed limits and seeing if they need to be increased.

The first street to be reassessed (as far as I know) is Newport Drive. There will be a public meeting at the Ann Arbor Free Methodist Church, 1951 Newport Road on Tuesday, September 20th at 7 pm.

The City voted *not*

Subscribe to List

View Past Issues

RSS

translate

**to implement** all sections of the Michigan Vehicle Code, particularly the standards relating to the setting of speed limits, in 2008. However, recent changes in the way judges apply the state law, coupled with restrictions the City faces, have caused the Council to accept the MVC in its entirety. As a result, the City is investigating locations that, by state law, have speed limits that might be set too low.

Like

C

[follow on Twitter](#) | [friend on Facebook](#) | [forward to a friend](#)

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)

Sent to ityler@quinnevans.com — [why did I get this?](#)  
[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)  
 Sabra Briere, Ann Arbor City City Council · 1418 Broadway · Ann Arbor, MI 48105

