



The Zombie Walk (Rosalynn is taking picture)



at Tanglefoot Gallery



with the one-and-only Vernis Schad



at Reading is Fundamental Fundraiser

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Life continues to be busy at City Hall. As many of you know, Kurt Kimball, Grand Rapids City Manager, is retiring at the end of the year. Eric DeLong was appointed to serve as Interim City Manager until the next City Manager is chosen. This decision is one of the most important a commissioner has to make, and as we embark on the search process, we would like to hear from you.

Please visit the home page of the City's website - www.grcity.us - to participate in a survey regarding the next City Manager. You can also submit your thoughts through my website by clicking on the survey button to the left. Your opinions are valuable.

Responding to your calls is my highest priority. In addition to helping constituents directly and working on the City Manager search, I am dedicating a substantial amount of time towards Green Grand Rapids, organizing and planning a Bike Summit in April 2009, working toward establishing the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks organization, and participating in the creation of a management plan for the Urban Forestry Committee. My understanding of city systems was improved through a tour of the Lake Michigan Filtration Plant as well as another ride along with the Grand Rapids Police Department. Fiscal realities require that every City Commissioner be well informed; I take this responsibility seriously.

The "Bliss for GR" website continues to improve (www.blissforgr.org .) All episodes of the "Bliss For GR" tv show are available, including a recent piece on the Wealthy Theater and Recycling.

As we approach the holiday season, I encourage everyone to visit our neighborhood business districts and support our locally owned businesses. Locally owned businesses are the heart of our city's economy and play an integral role in the health of our neighborhoods. I also hope you take the time to enjoy the wonderful holiday events occurring throughout our community. December 5th brought the opening of the Rosa Parks ice rink downtown, which is one of my favorite places to go during the winter season. I do hope you have time to pause and appreciate the beauty of the holiday season and that your holiday is filled with peace, joy and comfort.

As always, it is a true pleasure to serve you as your Second Ward City Commissioner. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns that I can help you with.

With warm regards,

Your input needed!
Take the survey:
blissforgr.org or grcity.us

INSIDE:
Coffee with Bliss
Community Events
City Issues & Updates
Serve on a City Board!

Garbage Collection: 456-3232 Housing concerns: 456-3053
Street Lights: 456-3281 Sidewalks: 456-3243 Streets: 456-3232
Special Events: 456-3615 Recycling: 456-4444
Tax Questions: 456-3081

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This newsletter was not paid for with Taxpayer dollars

Coffees with Bliss:

Wednesday, January 7th
at Noon at Suzy's Donut Shop

Corner of Knapp and Fuller
Tuesday, February 3rd
at 5:00pm at Mangiamo's
(on Lake Drive near Diamond)

Friday, March 13th at 7:30
at UGrind located
on Michigan between
College and Eastern

City Issues and Updates:

GRPS and the City of Grand Rapids – Joint Use of Facilities, Maintenance and Programming Agreement

The City of Grand Rapids once again entered into a Joint Use agreement with the Grand Rapids Public Schools. This is a continuation of agreements that date back to 1951. The terms and conditions of the agreement highlight the City and Schools desire to work together in the provision of facilities and delivery of services and programs. In addition to more efficient use of resources, some of the specific benefits include the use of outdoor athletic fields for team practices and field days and the use of gyms, cafeterias and classrooms for leisure, recreation and enrichment classes.

Change to the Board of Art and Museum Commissioners

The City Commission recently reduced the number of board members for the Art and Museum Commission from seven to five. Since 2006 the Public Museum of West Michigan has been a new private entity and has been operating the Museum by a separate board. The Board of Art and Museum Commissioners responsibility for oversight of day to day Museum operations has therefore necessarily been reduced.

Federal Support of the LOOP After School Program

This fall the City of Grand Rapids was awarded \$335,381 from the federal government in support of the LOOP After School Program. A portion of this funding is being utilized to deliver the LOOP After School programs to two sites with all its related services including transportation, evaluation, and after school tutoring. This funding will also be used to support the Grand Rapids Public Schools Youth Employment Program and support the creation of a Youth Master Plan.

GRPD Awarded Grant to Combat Child Sexual Predators

GRPD was the only police agency in the state to receive a grant from the US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Service to support a Grand Rapids Anti Child Exploitation (GRACE) program. GRACE will utilize \$435,480 to allow GRPD to create new capacities and participate in several multi-jurisdictional task forces which directly impact public safety through public awareness, prevention, identification, investigation, apprehension and the prosecution and conviction of Criminal Sexual Predators

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Upcoming Community Events:

December 13th:

It's a Wonderful Life
at Wealthy Theater

December 17th: Economic
Development Corporation

January 9th: City-School Liaison

January 13th: North Park
School Open House

January 15th:
Kurt Kimball's Retirement Party

January 26th: Green Grand Rapids

January 27th:
City Commission Retreat

February 4th: Inforum Reception

City Issues and Updates *continued:*

\$1 Coin Program

Grand Rapids is one of only four cities chosen by the United States Mint to test new efforts encouraging residents and businesses to use \$1 coins in everyday purchases. Did you know that many of Grand Rapids' parking meters accept \$1 Coins? In addition to being easy to use, \$1 Coins are 100 percent recyclable, last for decades and save our Nation billions of dollars over time.

City of Grand Rapids Awarded \$4.6 Million to Protect Children from Lead Poisoning

The City of Grand Rapids has been awarded \$4.6 million from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to protect children from lead-based paint hazards by fixing an additional 336 homes. Under previous HUD funding, the City and its partners in the Get the Lead Out! collaborative have fixed 740 homes to date. Previous funding awards are scheduled to run out at the end of 2008. This funding will allow the City to repair another 336 homes, which will help Get the Lead Out! partners reach their target of fixing the lead hazards in 1,000 homes in Grand Rapids. The grant will be made to the City of Grand Rapids, and a majority of the award dollars will go directly into fixing lead hazards in older homes where children reside. Lighthouse Communities, a non-profit organization, will assist the City with construction management. Home Repair Services, the Kent County Health Department, the Rental Property Owners Association, and the Healthy Homes Coalition will assist with community education and outreach. Together, these groups will train more than 600 more people in lead-safe work practices and other strategies for protecting children from lead poisoning.

The Get the Lead Out! campaign is a collaborative effort of more than a dozen organizations working together since 2001 to eliminate lead poisoning in Kent County. Since 2001, lead poisoning rates have decreased 67% in Kent County.

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Current City Board and Commission Vacancy List

*There are a number of
vacancies that currently exist
on a number of City Boards and
Commissions including:*

Tax Increment Finance Authority

Parks and Recreation
Advisory Board

Income Tax Board of Review

Housing Rehabilitation
Appeals Board

Housing Appeal Board

Grand Rapids
Historical Commission

Downtown Improvement District

Civil Service Board

Cable Television Advisory Forum

Automobile Parking Commission

City Issues and Updates *continued:*

VIP Parking Downtown

The VIP parking card gives access to downtown parking that surrounds some of downtown Grand Rapids most vibrant nightly venues. The parking space allocated to this pilot program includes 100 spaces at each the Monroe Center and Cherry Commerce Parking Ramps and 250 spaces at the Pearl-Ionia Parking Ramp.

For \$15 per month customers have access to park in one of these facilities from 5 pm until 6 am. To participate in the pilot, customers are required to complete and submit an account agreement, credit card authorization, and survey. Customers will have their accounts automatically charged at the beginning of the month. Random surveys will be sent to e mail addresses provided when sign up occurs. Surveys will be confidential but extremely important in determining the success of the pilot and provided to Parking Commission for program review in November.

GR Youth Commission

The new Grand Rapids Youth Commission consists of 25 outstanding 7th through 12th-grade students who are all residents of Grand Rapids. This spring they competed against 114 applicants to participate in an 18-month long paid leadership and Youth Master Plan project beginning this June and ending in December of 2009. The Youth Commission will help develop and administer a needs assessment survey and teen profile for the Youth Master Plan, create an on-line interactive resource website for youth, and participate in job and leadership training

City Boards and Commissions – How to Get Involved:

The City has a number of Boards and Commissions comprised of citizens that discuss critical issues, examine ideas, make decisions and make recommendations to the City and the City Commission. They meet at various times throughout the month and each has a different level of responsibility. On the left side of this page is a list of current vacancies. If you are interested in applying to one of the positions below, contact the City Clerk's Office at 456-3004.

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City Issues and Updates *continued:*

Fire Department establishes Fire Corps

Since September 11, fire and emergency service departments all across the nation are struggling with increasing demands for service coupled with reduced funding. In order to respond to these increasing demands and provide more services to the community, the Grand Rapids Fire Department has established a Fire Corps program and is seeking help from the community.

Fire Corps creates opportunities for citizens to give back to their community by providing non-emergency assistance to their local fire departments. From creating websites to maintaining stations, promoting life safety education or offering administrative assistance, you can help your community become safer and better prepared for natural disasters, terrorist threats and other emergencies.

Fire Corps, a component of the Department of Homeland security's Citizen Corps program, is a national grassroots effort to increase the capacity of fire departments through the use of community members. Fire Corps provides resources for fire departments to utilize citizens in non-emergency roles so they can develop, implement, and sustain programs and services that will help their fire department meet the needs of their community.

Housing Rehabilitation Program and Rental Rehabilitation Program:

The City continues to support both the Housing Rehabilitation Program and the Rental Rehabilitation Program. The goal of the Housing Rehabilitation Program is to provide financial and technical assistance to eligible home owners to repair and improve their homes. The goal of the Rental Rehabilitation Program is to provide financial assistance to support rental rehabilitation projects. Please contact the Community Development Department for additional information and applications at 456-3677.