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City Hall: (616) 456-3035

Cell: (616) 889-1277

Fax: (616) 456-3111

[rosalynn@blissforgr.org](mailto:rosalynn@blissforgr.org)

[rbliss@grcity.us](mailto:rbliss@grcity.us)



Greetings friends and neighbors,

I hope you are finding time to enjoy this beautiful summer...even though the weather has been a bit unpredictable at times. As many of you know, I am up for re-election this year and will be on the ballot in the general election on November 3, 2009. I will be out knocking on doors this fall and you will likely see some Bliss signs popping up throughout the Second Ward. On Thursday, August 20th, we will be having a fundraiser (\$25 tickets) at the Richard App Gallery with food, drinks and music by Grand Rapids own Drew Nelson.

This year has been busy responding to constituent calls, working on the City Manager search, balancing the budget, and kicking off the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks.

After several months of community meetings, deliberation and compromise, the City Commission passed the 2009/2010 fiscal year budget in June with the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009. The budget included many cuts, totaling approximately 8 million dollars...which was necessary in order to balance the budget. Revenues are down due to losses in income tax and revenue sharing. Expenditures continue to rise because of increased health care and pension costs. We will be facing deficits for the next few years, forcing additional difficult decisions. We will begin discussing the next fiscal year budget this fall. I welcome your thoughts and input as important budget decisions are made.

Despite these challenges, the city continues to progress in many areas. Friends of Grand Rapids Parks was launched this spring with several park events kicking off the summer and the organization. Steve Faber was hired as the Executive Director and is developing a website, initiating a membership campaign, identifying goals and projects, connecting with neighbors and neighborhoods, and reaching out to find support for the organization. Friends of GR Parks is committed to enhancing, protecting and improving parks throughout the City.

All of the swimming pools are open again this year, made possible by generous donations from individuals, companies and foundations throughout our community.

We have also been diligently working to recruit the best possible candidates for City Manager. Four final candidates were presented to the City Commission on July 21st, with two internal candidates (Eric Delong and Greg Sundstrom) and two external candidates (Norton Bonaparte and Benjamin Hughes). Interviews will take place the last week of July and it is projected that a decision will be made by August. This is an incredibly important decision, so please do contact me if you have thoughts that you would like to share. A community forum will be held on Monday, July 27th at 7pm at the downtown Library.

As always, it is an honor to serve you.  
Rosalynn Bliss



Com. Rosalynn Bliss  
City of G.R. 300 Monroe NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503



Volunteering with Friends of Parks

**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**

E-mail: [rosalynn@blissforgr.org](mailto:rosalynn@blissforgr.org) or [rbliss@grcity.us](mailto:rbliss@grcity.us)

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This newsletter was not paid for with Taxpayer dollars



With the Mayor at Rothbury

## City Issues and Updates:

### 6th Annual Mayor's Grand River Clean Up Event:

On **September 19th** the City of Grand Rapids and WMEAC will be sponsoring the 6th Annual Mayor's Grand River Clean Up. This annual event brings together hundreds of volunteers who have made a significant impact on the quality of the Grand River by removing over 45,000 pounds of trash and debris along the riverbanks. These efforts help make Grand Rapids a better place to live, work and visit.

### Additional Decisions made during Budget Discussion:

- New electronic payment lanes in some City owned parking lots
- Increase rate for parking tickets fines
- Aggressive focus on becoming more sustainable and energy efficient (utilizing stimulus funds to improve energy efficiency)
- Greater use of 61st District Court Community Service Work Program
- Reduce expenditures to street lighting
- Use of some stimulus funds designated for CDBG to be used for street repairs

### Revenue Sharing:

Revenue sharing continues to be cut by the state, which is having a direct detrimental impact on the City's budget and services. The Senate is proposing an additional 12% reduction in revenue sharing for FY2010. The City has already lost millions of dollars due to revenue sharing cuts and continued reductions will have significant consequences for our City. I encourage all of our neighbors to contact our State Senator (Senator Hardiman) and Representatives in the House (Rep. Schmidt and Rep. Dean).

### Interim Fire Chief Appointment:

On July 7th, Chief Vansolkema retired from the Grand Rapids Fire Department. A search for a new Fire Chief will take place later in this year. Until that time, Chief Knapp will be serving as the Acting Fire Chief.

### 2009 Firefighter of the Year:

This year firefighter Kristy Kehl was honored as Firefighter of the Year. Selection was made by a panel of her peers and by the American Legion Furniture City Post #258. Firefighter Kehl is the first female to receive this award since inception in 1970.



Kristy Kehl  
Photo Courtesy Local 366  
Spring 2009 Newsletter

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- Coffees with Bliss:**  
Tuesday, August 11th at 5:00pm  
at Graydon's Crossing
- Thursday, September 17th at 7:30am  
at Marie Catrib's
- Monday, October 12th at Noon  
at Suzy's Donut Shop
- Tuesday, November 10th at 5:00pm  
at the Green Well



Kara Wood

## City Issues and Updates (continued):

Congratulations to Kara Wood, Grand Rapid's Director of Economic Development: Kara Wood was featured in West Michigan Business Women – Young Professional Edition – as one of 20 young professional women making a difference in our community. This was a supplement to the June 22 MiBiz.

### Board and Commission Representation Report:

On July 15th the Clerk's Office presented a report on the City's Board and Commission Representation. Currently the representation for all City Boards and Commissions is:

68.5% Men and 31.5% Women

80.2% White, 14.7% Black, 3.8% Hispanic, .004% American Indian, and .008% Arab American

The City is consistently looking for individuals to serve on boards and commissions.

If you are interested in serving on one of our many boards or commissions, please complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) and return it to the Clerk's Office. Even if there is not currently a vacancy, PIF's are kept on file and considered when a position becomes available. You can obtain a PIF by going to the City's website at [www.grcity.us](http://www.grcity.us) or by contacting the City at 456-3010.

### Current board and Commission Vacancies:

Board of Zoning Appeals

Cable Television Advisory Forum

Housing Appeal Board

Housing Rehabilitation Board

Tax Increment Finance Authority

Personnel information forms can be downloaded at [www.grcity.us](http://www.grcity.us) at the Clerk's Department.

### ArtPrize:

The City recently amended the City Code for permits for Special Events to allow for events that last longer than 72 hours – with City Commission approval. ArtPrize is a widely publicized two-week art contest, scheduled for this fall, which will take place in Grand Rapids. [www.artprize.org](http://www.artprize.org)



### Monroe Place Parking and Development at 20 Monroe:

The City Commission approved a development agreement with 20 Monroe Building Company Limited Partnership that allows Greg Gilmore to acquire the land (currently a city owned parking lot near the Bob) to build a 20,000 square foot building with retail, entertainment, and residential space. Construction is scheduled to occur in 2011.

### Uptown CID:

The City Commission recently approved the creation of the Uptown Corridor Improvement District Authority Board (Uptown CID). I was excited to be appointed by the Mayor to serve on the Uptown CID for a three-year term. Others appointed to serve on the Uptown CID include: Baird Hawkins, Amy Ruis, Kristine Szurna Bersceh, Michael Dykhouse, Rick Powell, Tami Vandenberg, Guy Bazzani, and Joana Hively.

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## City Issues and Updates (continued):

### Resolution on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Commissioner Lumpkins and I supported a resolution outlining our commitment to ensuring the rights of children. This was initially brought to us by Parenting for Peace and then was analyzed by the Mayor's Youth Council. The four core principles highlighted in the resolution reflect highly the principles that guide our work as a City – namely, principles of non-discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, the right to a quality of life, supervision, protection, and healthy development, and respect for the views of the child.

### The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative:

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiatives (GLSLCI) Mayors have been working on creation of a pharmaceuticals and personal care products framework for municipalities residing in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basins. The GLSLCI understands that Great Lakes watersheds are being impacted in part by improper disposal of these items. The City Commission officially supported this initiative in June.



### Environmental Protection Tip:

"Don't Rush to Flush" – Pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCP's) include prescription drugs, over the counter medications and cosmetics. They can pass through wastewater treatment plants in small amounts and find their way into rivers and lakes. Controlling what goes down the drain helps to protect our environment and water quality.

### Construction of Oxford Street Bridge and Trail:

The City approved the construction of a non-motorized trail from Oxford Street to Wealthy Street, most of which is located on abandoned railroad property, which the City previously acquired. The non-motorized trail will also extend along a portion of Wealthy Street and the Grand River. The trail includes the upgrade of bridge decks on bridges over the tracks on Market Avenue and the Grand River, a new bridge over Chestnut Street, signage and landscaping. This project is being paid for by an MDOT Enhancement Grant and a contribution from the Frey Foundation.

### Sweet Street Park:

Recently the City obtained the Sweet Street Park from the Grand Rapids Public Schools. The City is currently working with the Creston Neighborhood Association, neighbors and Amway to build a new playground through the KaBOOM program – which is a Community Build Program. This is scheduled to occur in September and will be a wonderful asset to this neighborhood.

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## City Issues and Updates (continued):

### Community Development Block Grant – Recovery Program (CDBG-R):

The City is eligible to receive \$1,078,852 from the CDBG-R Program under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This special allocation is intended to stimulate the economy through measures that modernize the nation's infrastructure. The following projects have been recommended for funding with this allocation:

- Redevelopment of Joe Taylor Park
- Residential Street Improvements within targeted areas
- Urban tree canopy – tree planting in targeted areas
- Building renovations at Fulton Street Farmer's Market
- Construction of East Fulton parking lot
- Site improvements at Kensington Park
- Site improvements at Sweet Street Park

### Pilot Recycling Program:

This year the City implemented a pilot-recycling program in the downtown Grand Rapids area and in some City parks to encourage residents and visitors to recycle where they live, work and play. Receptacles for recyclable materials were placed at Calder Plaza, Rosa Parks Circle, Canal Street Park, Indian Trails Golf Course, Ah-Nab-Awen Park and Monroe Center.



With Andy Guy

### Bliss For GR Television Show:

Bliss for GR" is a public access television show that I host which airs throughout the month on Wednesdays at 9pm on Channel 25. My goal is to use this forum to inform citizens about important city issues, projects, and events. Upcoming shows include topics on the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Clean Water Action and Urban Forestry. You can also watch these shows at my website by clicking on the Video link.



With Rachel Hood at  
West Michigan Environmental Action Council  
Green Drinks event.