



Blissbits

Newsletter of Rosalynn Bliss 2nd Ward City Commissioner Grand Rapids, Michigan

Volume 13 Page 1

blissforgr.org

Greetings friends and neighbors,

From fundraisers for Diabetes, to Artprize, to golf fundraisers and connecting with neighborhoods to helping maintain our parks, this fall has been a busy one. What you see above is just a sampling of the dedicated friends and citizens who give so much to make our city great.

Speaking of a great group of people: I am currently working with the Fulton Street Farmer's Market Development Committee which is working to improve the Farmer's Market. I have also been appointed to serve on the Land Bank Authority, particularly as we continue to address problems related to the housing market and the foreclosure crisis.

Hopefully everyone is aware of our new recycling program and the shift to a single-stream recycling center. You likely have seen the blue and yellow carts throughout our neighborhoods. This has been a project that the City has been working on with the County for a few years - for which the County led the way in making happen. I was honored to be a member of the Solid Waste Commission as we examined other single stream recycling facilities throughout the country. The facility is incredible and if you are interested in seeing it, please let me know.

With the continued economic downturn, the City continues to face budget deficits. We have already started working on our next budget and are closely exploring ways to restructure the organization to be more sustainable.

These are challenging times that we face, however I am confident that together we can find solutions that maintain our quality of life in our City.

If you have questions, thoughts, ideas or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Honored to be serving you,

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



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**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

City Hall phone number: (616) 456-3035 Cell: (616) 889-1277 Fax: (616) 456-3111

This newsletter was not paid for with Taxpayer dollars

E-mail: rosalynn@blissforgr.org or rbliss@grcity.us

Coffees with Bliss:

Last Coffee of 2010!

December 7th at 5pm

Sazerac Lounge on Plainfield

City Issues and Updates:

State Revenue Sharing:

Please join me in thanking State Representative Roy Schmidt who worked hard in Lansing to prevent additional cuts to revenue sharing. In Lansing, there was a lot of discussion about potential cuts to State Revenue Sharing in the State legislature. However, due to the strong leadership of Representative Schmidt, we secured revenue sharing at the current rate, which equals 1.3 million dollars for the City of Grand Rapids.

Appointing a Comptroller:

Earlier this year City Comptroller Stan Milanowski retired, leaving the elected position of Comptroller vacant. According to the City Charter, it is the City Commissions responsibility to appoint/fill the vacancy of the City Comptroller. After an open application period, a first interview for all applicants, a public forum and second interview for the finalists, we announced our choice of Donijo Robbins DeJonge. Ms. DeJonge will be installed at either our December 7th or 21st meeting, and begin her new position on January 1st, 2011.

2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

The City Commission approved the update to the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update (2010-2015) was prepared to guide future decisions on park land, recreation facilities and open space in the City of Grand Rapids. Within the City, there are 1,209 acres of parkland in 71 city-owned parks. There is an additional 350 acres of park land in 48 park-school sites. The master plan is a strategic document that articulates specific goals to various agencies and organizations that fund local recreation and park improvement projects. The plan is comprehensive, thoughtful and visionary... and I am eager to work toward making many of the goals a reality.

Footing Drain Disconnection Program:

The City Commission recently supported the creation of a footing drain disconnection program, which will reduce improper storm water inflow connections to the sanitary sewer system and eliminate backups into occupied structures. The program will be for two districts: Maryland Estates and East Leonard. This came to the City Commission after the City contracted with engineering firms to study the problem and make recommendations. The City worked closely with the neighbors throughout the process before a final recommendation was brought forward.



At a Creston Neighborhood Fundraiser with Tommy Allen



Meeting with Lisa Lyons

City Issues and Updates continued:

MSHDA Emergency Solutions Grant Program:

The City Commission approved FY 2010-2011 Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program funds from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). The ESG program offers financial assistance to public and nonprofit organizations to support the delivery of effective services for persons who are homeless within the context of a comprehensive community wide Continuum of Care planning process and implementation strategy. The Grand Rapids Coalition to End Homelessness serves as the local Continuum of Care. Grants were awarded to: ACSET, Community Rebuilders, Family Promise, Grand Rapids Housing Commission, GRACE, YWCA, Coalition to End Homelessness, and the City of GR Community Development Department.

New Partnership with GVSU:

The City of Grand Rapids recently began a partnership with GVSU with the creation of the Transformation Research and Analysis Team (TRAT). TRAT was created as a tool for City departments and elected officials to conduct research and analysis in areas of interest identified as vital to transforming the City's operation and/or service delivery model. The team members of TRAT will work closely with the City's departments to research, analyze, and recommend applied sustainable development best practices that will help City departments achieve their goals identified in the City's sustainability plan.

Legislation initiatives:

- The City is seeking legislation to allow the option to have a County Allocation Board to authorize one tax bill for cities. The proposed legislation involves altering how the current winter property taxes are levied so cities are given the option to consolidate the property tax billing. This would allow the City and its citizens to save money and allow the City to be more efficient.
- The City is seeking a change in the minimum number of unpaid parking tickets a person may have before the Secretary of State will not issue or renew a person's drivers license. The number would be reduced from the current 6 outstanding violations to 3. The City could recoup up to \$350,000 per year in fine revenue.

Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss City of Grand Rapids 300 Monroe NW Grand Rapids, MI 49503

E-mail: rosalynn@blissforgr.org or rbliss@grcity.us

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City Issues and Updates continued:

My GR City Points:

My GR City Points is a new web-based incentive program that encourages people to volunteer to help build a stronger Grand Rapids community, while earning reward points that can be redeemed at local businesses for discounts on products and services. My GR City Points will operate on a platform that links people to local businesses and to local government. My GR City Points is a program created in partnership with Atomic Object, Local First, a Grand Rapids organization that promotes local businesses and encourages purchasing local products and services, and CEOs for Cities, a national network dedicated to building and sustaining the next generation of great American cities. Residents can earn My GR City Points for recycling with the new Single Stream Recycling Program and by volunteering to support the City and the community. Points earned can be redeemed at local businesses for discounts on products and services. This is a very exciting initiative and I look forward to seeing all of the opportunities that it presents.



Burial Records Online:

Residents can now search online, 24 hours a day, for loved ones who are buried at any of the City's six cemeteries (Fairplains, Fulton, Greenwood, Oakgrove, Oakhill, or Woodlawn). Simply go to the website <http://cemetery.grcity.us> to search by name. Information such as the date of birth, age, burial location, gender, place of death, date of death, spouse's name, mother's name, and father's name (if available) can all be found electronically. This new webpage is a great resource for families of loved ones and genealogists.

City Issues and Updates continued:

One Beer at a Time:

The City approved an application for an Industrial Facilities Exemption Certificate for One Beer at a Time, who has developed a plan to create a micro brewery and entertainment complex at 930 Lake Drive. The current plans indicate the development of 5,200 square foot production/manufacturing facility, a 4,400 square foot restaurant/tap room and additional space for a courtyard and beer garden. This project is expected to create 40 new jobs.

City's commitment to transform City government:

The City Commission recently approved a resolution outlining the City Commission's priorities for transforming the City, including:

- Improve Customer Service
- Review City Operations, specifically the public service department, fire department and police department
- Reduce employee compensation
- Consolidate city assets

Salary adjustments:

On June 15, all appointed, non-represented, 61st District Court non-represented management and executive classified employees voluntarily declined the previously scheduled 2.5% wage increase which would have been effective June 30, 2010. This decision recognizes the City's difficult financial state and is appreciated by the City Commission.

Clearwire 4G in Grand Rapids:

After several years of work, the City was excited to launch Clearwire 4G in Grand Rapids. The City's primary goal for this project is to enhance public safety by dramatically increasing the information available to mobile police officers and firefighters. Clearwire service will accommodate the City's public safety requirements, including real-time video streaming and photo transfer for police and fire vehicles traveling at up to 70 miles per hour. Service will not only be available for Police, Fire, and emergency medical service providers; but also to municipal field workers, and to the City's businesses, citizens, and visitors. The best part is that this will all be accomplished without burden on our taxpayers.