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Single Stream recycling, Fuller Road Station, Argo reconstruction and, oh-yes, what's on the Agenda!

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Dear neighbors,

It appears we all survived Art Fair -- and we won't talk about the weather. My, isn't it *summer* . . .

The City Administrator

Late yesterday (Friday, July 29) I learned that the preferred candidate for City Administrator, **Steve Powers** (County Administrator for Marquette County) had accepted the City's contract offer. I don't have specifics on the contract to share, but expect to see a resolution on Council's agenda next week that provides the necessary detail. I also hope to see a resolution that recognizes the efforts of interim City Administrator, Tom Crawford.

Safety

Six sexual assaults on Ann Arbor's streets since July 15. That's not a statistic that anyone wants to see, and it certainly brought out a lot of concern regarding police staffing levels and safety -- not that there hadn't already been a lot of discussion on these issues. I went to the Chief of Police's press conference on Wednesday to be certain I knew as much as possible. I also went to the Take Back the Streets march on Thursday night.

There's no decent advice to offer about safety. I've seen increased presence of City police officers on downtown streets, and I'm not

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the only one noticing. But I continue to hear from residents who have seen the police. I've seen them only in cruisers, and I think there just aren't enough of them.

I've read all sorts of messages that encourage women to: buy a gun and learn how to shoot; learn unarmed combat; never travel alone; never go downtown; never go out at night. I encourage people to be vigilant, take care of themselves, and report anything they believe is suspicious to the police immediately. I don't care if 'suspicious' is not related to this series of attacks -- anything, such as someone entering your home through an unlocked door, or knocking on doors in your neighborhood in a way that makes you uncomfortable, or following you down the street.

The police aren't really in the role of deterring crime -- I'm told criminals rarely expect to be caught. Instead, the police are in the role of solving crimes, and that means that, unfortunately, crimes have to occur first. Help our city and our neighbors by letting the police know when you think a crime might be being committed. 911 works.

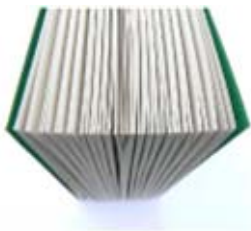


Coffee wakes some of us up

I hold office hours 7:30 to 9 am on Mondays at the Northside Grill.

Most of the time, I take the City's computer with me, in case an issue arises that needs immediate response or action. Sometimes I take my electronic book (see **What am I Reading?** to find out some of the current list.)

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,

Fuller Road Station

The Mayor released a [letter](#) on July 27 regarding Fuller Road Station. Those in opposition have created a [website](#) to present an alternative view.

Fuller Park(s) and the location of this proposed station are in the First Ward. During the years I've been on Council (and before!) the City has been talking about building a new train station to serve the additional commuter and high-speed trains that should be coming to Ann Arbor. Funding for those trains continues to be a stumbling block. The City has received some funding directly toward the project (\$2.8 Million); this money will fund the engineering drawings for the train station. It's also supposed to be available to reimburse the City for the environmental assessment (already in draft mode, but awaiting comment from the US government).

I've placed a fairly large number of documents on my [website](#) that relate to Fuller Road. I've also requested documents from the City for anyone who is seeking more information or data. I haven't yet distilled everything I know or think I know into a position paper. At this time, I have no information on when Fuller Road Station will appear on the Working Session Agenda or the City Council Agenda.

Lansing government,

development and planning, policy
transportation planning . . .

Argo Pond and Headrace

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Here's my current and recent reading list:

The Trouble with City Planning, by Kristina Ford

I've recently learned that Kristina Ford used to live in Ann Arbor. This makes the read even more interesting. Ms Ford was in charge of planning in New Orleans until shortly before the hurricane in 2005. (It's not really about New Orleans; it's about the failure to actually pay attention to residents and their needs when planning cities.)

Getting to Yes, by Roger Fisher (a re-read)

subtitle: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In. I've been thinking a lot about how best to work with others in the community to find policies to which we can agree. This is important at Council and in general.

Last year the Council approved a plan to reconstruct the headrace (that stream next to the path, the one used as a canoe portage). I recently received notice that **DTE** has requested that the City postpone work on the whitewater aspects of the design, while DTE cleans up some environmental problems on their site ([letter from DTE](#)). If the City postpones that part of the construction and works with DTE, DTE has committed to paying that portion of the costs for the whitewater features. Reconstruction of the headrace will continue; Council has not yet approved the postponement. I took a walk along the path a week or so ago (yes, I know it's closed). Here are [photos](#) I took (at least, I hope this works -- I don't use Flickr much.)

On the Agenda

You may have noticed the [survey](#) I sent out on Friday, July 29. This survey meets a narrow need: Council members may decide at our next meeting (**Thursday, August 4th**) whether to adjust the contract with Recycle Ann Arbor to provide a larger payment per recycle cart. The Council was asked to amend the contract with RAA during the Council meeting on July 5; this request was defeated. At the July 18 Council meeting, the Council agreed to reconsider their vote, but postponed that reconsideration until August 4th.

Sometimes it's all about the money. Staff members recommend increasing the funding for RAA by \$107,000 per year. At the working session in July, Council members learned that the Solid Waste Millage Fund might be depleted by 2017 (a deficit projected at \$500,000). The Staff recommended that Council consider [privatizing trash pick-up](#) in order to prevent the deficit. Increasing expenditures [today](#) only moves that deficit date forward. (The Council suggested that Staff find another solution, by the way.) One possible place to reduce expenditures is by cancelling the contract with Recycle Bank (RB). Single stream recycling and Recycle Bank were presented to Council originally as a package deal. Although members of the public and Council questioned whether single stream recycling was a good idea, only a few people had strong opinions -- and no solid data -- about whether RB would effectively increase participation in recycling.

Recycle Bank is an incentive program that monitors how many

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times a month recycle bins are put at the curb, how many pounds of recycling are collected on the route, and how many households on the route have signed up for RB. Imagine that your route put 20 tons of recyclables out in a month, that there are 30 households on the route, and that 15 of them have signed up for RB. Those 15 would receive RB points based on the 20 tons collected that month. These points can be traded for coupons.

After almost a year, fewer than 50% of eligible households have signed up for RB.

The City's contract with RB requires that we pay them about \$150,000 per year. If we continue the contract for three years, the City will have spent \$450,000. If we end the contract next week, the City should spend about \$375,000. (\$150,000 for one year, \$12,500 per month of the new year, \$120,000 equipment depreciation cost, \$80,000 for miscellaneous costs, such as printing, mailing, etc. not yet billed to the City.)

The data that staff members have provided to Council -- from the vendors -- does not conclusively indicate an increase in recycling that can be attributed to Recycle Bank. There's a chart in this [report](#), prepared by Dave Askins of The Chronicle using data provided by the City, that might help you understand. If you haven't taken the **SURVEY** to tell me what you think, please do.

Ordinances

The City Council will vote on two ordinance revisions that change the retirement benefits. One increases the contribution requirements for Police Service Specialists (increasing the employee retirement contribution from 5% to 6%). This is the result of a contract settlement. The other changes retiree health care benefits, allowing retirees to [access](#) their health care through the City's health care provisions, but at their own cost.

Resolutions

There are two resolutions to place on the November ballot the millage for street and bridge maintenance and a new millage for sidewalk maintenance. The Streets Millage rate would be re-set at 2 mills; this would show up as an increase, because Headlee rollbacks have decreased the millage rate since the last millage was renewed. The **Sidewalk** millage would add 1/8th of a mill (.0125) to pay for the [reconstruction](#) of sidewalks. This millage

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would add about \$13 to your taxes, annually.

still have questions regarding these millage proposals; I haven't received answers yet that satisfy my concerns. In general terms, however, I endorse both the Streets Millage (I think we all want the streets to be maintained) and the sidewalk millage (I don't believe this should be the responsibility of my neighbor but not me, when everyone uses the sidewalks). Here's a link to the [Streets and Bridges](#) millage language, and one other to the [Sidewalk](#) millage language.

Consent Agenda

There's a resolution to fund surveillance cameras, in conjunction with an agreement between AATA, the County, and the City. I've asked, but not yet received answers, on where the surveillance would be placed, who would be watched, and who would be watching. This remains an issue of concern for me.

These are the highlights from the Agenda as I see them. Here's a link to all of the items currently on the [Agenda](#); please keep in mind that the agenda can change before and during the Council meeting. (Yes, this is allowed, as Council members can bring ordinances or resolutions to the floor, and ask others to allow them to put the item on the Agenda.)

As always, if you have questions or concerns about any item on or off of the Agenda, I'd love to hear from you.



On the Horizon

I've been talking with some of the members of the R4C/R2A study committee. Although I don't know when the report from the committee will reach the Planning Commission or City Council, I'm concerned



Voting on Tuesday?

To my friends in the Second, Third and Fifth Wards: I don't endorse in Council elections. Whoever wins the

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that the results of their work
reflected at the committee

learned and what the members recommend as changes to zoning language. I also hope the work this committee has accomplished is appreciated by Staff and Council members as the committee's consensus. I understand there will be at least one more meeting of this committee before anything is submitted to Planning Commission.

I saw surveyor's helpers working around the DTE site. DTE intends to clean up their site (see the update on Argo, above), but I cannot tell you what else might happen. It's a parcel many of us have wanted to add to the City's parks.

election, I want to be able to work with. As a private citizen, I have opinions -- and so should you. I hope you will exercise your **right to vote on August 2nd**, and select a candidate for the November election. As a Democrat, I hope you will select the best possible candidate from the field. And don't be too slow -- polls close at 8 pm.

To my friends in the **FIRST** Ward, no one challenged my right to appear on the ballot as a Democrat for November. As a result, there is no primary. However, I will be campaigning, and hope to come to your door or meet with you to discuss the issues. If you or your neighbors want to meet, just call. I'll make myself available. And please don't forget that I really am at the Northside Grill every Monday morning from 7:30 am to 9:00 am.

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