



FRANKLY SPEAKING

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New committees making progress on many fronts for Prior Lake



By Frank Boyles
City Manager

Your City Council has established numerous committees to address specific priorities set out in the 2030 Vision and Strategic Plan and to facilitate better public input on key community topics.

Below is a summary of the exciting progress being made in a wide range of categories:

Tree Preservation

The city has a tree preservation ordinance, the purpose of which is to preserve and renew our urban forest. A task force has been assembled to review the ordinance and recommend areas for upgrade to the City Council. It is composed of council member Cheri Dornbush, city staff members, two developers and two citizens. The task force has reviewed the ordinance in detail and identified 22 areas for discussion. The next meeting of the Tree Preservation Task Force is March 14, at 5 p.m. The task force will begin to discuss the 22 areas to determine which need to be addressed in a new ordinance. The City Council is expected to receive recommendations from the task force within 120 days.

Heritage Committee

In its three meetings, the Heritage Committee, composed of council members Cheri Dornbush and Steve Millar, has made considerable progress. The committee has agreed that its three objectives should be to:

- Facilitate finalization of master plan for the Heritage Farmstead (former Kop farm) property;
- Propose a community heritage celebration;
- Propose heritage or historic displays for public buildings.

A master plan draft is completed for the former Kop property. The committee will report to the City Council on March 6 to share the draft concept. A town meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2006, at 6:30 p.m. at the Lakefront Park Pavilion to receive community input on the master plan.

Communications Advisory Committee

Council members Steve Millar and Chad LeMair have been appointed to this committee. They will be joined by two residents and two staff members. This committee has numerous objectives, but the top one is to facilitate better day-to-day, two-way communication with our public. When the committee meets in March, it will consider the initiation of a customer service program with the assistance of Government Training Services. At the urging of the City Council, the City Manager has begun posting articles on his blog at www.cityofpriorlake.com.

The public is encouraged to read and submit comments. Several town hall meetings are being scheduled to encourage two-way communication between the public and City Council on specific topics.

Water Treatment Plant

Council members Cheri Dornbush and Chad LeMair are on this committee. A question has already been raised about conducting a referendum to approve the expenditure for the treatment plant. Briggs and Morgan, the city's bond counsel, advises that Minnesota Statutes 429 and 444 do not provide for referendums for this purpose, and the Attorney General has ruled that advisory referendums (i.e. referendums not required by statute) are not appropriate, nor a proper public expenditure. The committee has met to discuss the project, and in the near future, will present a report to the City Council. That report will propose, among other things, a town meeting to address questions which may exist about the project. The cost of the treatment plant will be paid for by water users and the adjustments have already been built into the water rates, effective January of 2005.

Fire Station No. 2 Building Committee

Mayor Jack Haugen and council member Steve Millar serve on this committee together with firefighters and staff members. The first meeting of this committee is tentatively set for March. One of the first actions the committee must take is to assure that the site to be donated by Wensmann accommodates the planned fire station.

Other Committees

These are not the only efforts contemplated. A Technology Committee is to be formed to look at the question of whether the city should get involved in providing Internet service. A Senior Citizen Committee is to be formed to provide seniors with more immediate and effective access to their city government. An Economic Development Committee will also be created to work with Economic Development Director Paul Snook. The City Council, through Mayor Haugen, also continues its participation in the Park, Athletic and Recreation Task Force, which is scheduled to complete a draft report in May.

Having all these committees is hard work and lots of hours. But the Council wants to provide access to government to those who wish to have input. The committees are a great way to provide for such input. If you are interested a committee, feel free to fill out and submit an application form found at www.cityofpriorlake.com, or just stop by the Fire Station at 16776 Fish Point Road SE, during normal business hours to fill one out.