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News & Views

October 29, 2019

The City of New Hope's Employee Newsletter

Park/Pool Construction Update

Pool: Work on the bathhouse continued this last week including storm and gutter drains were installed, temporary heat was added, and installation of the roof metal panels continued. Gutters for the 50-meter pool were started.

Theater: The installation of the first and second slabs and the sidewalks around the building are underway.

Skatepark: The skatepark has been tested by the designer and passed inspection. There is one concrete panel that will be double checked in the spring. Staff is discussing the best time to move the repurposed equipment onto the site.

Park: Work on the pool/theater parking lot continues, including the drainage system. *(pictured is the 50-meter pool)*



Police Station & City Hall Construction Update

Most building projects inside the city hall and police station are nearing completion. Terra continues to have a presence as they address a few outstanding issues. All of the conference rooms are now fully operational with the exception of the video conferencing in Civic Center. If you find any technology that is not working as you expect or you need assistance in how something works, please let Rich or Walker know. If there are still outstanding facility issues that you've not spoken with your director or Valerie about, please let them know.

The parking lot will be paved soon and construction continues on the employee patios. Prep work has started for the sidewalk in front of the police department entrance. The area will be graded and prepped so Terra can install the insulation and tubing for the heated sidewalk. Work should start shortly on landscaping. Safety bollards are scheduled for mid-November.

Food Pantry Donations & Holiday Drives

To date in 2019, employees have donated \$565 for Wacky Wednesday participation and collected almost 444 pounds of food for donation to NEAR. The annual Thanksgiving food drive has started and will continue through Nov. 22. The holiday food drive will commence Nov. 21 and last through Dec. 12. Cash donations for the food drive are also accepted by the parks & recreation staff.

Mark Your Calendar

- Nov. 1 – Open Enrollment Begins
- Nov. 11 – Veterans Day – City Offices Closed
- Nov. 14 - City Hall/Police Station Open House
- Nov. 20 – Wacky Wednesday
- Nov. 28-29 – Thanksgiving Holiday – City Offices Closed
- Dec. 5 – Employee Recognition Event
- Dec. 24-25 – Christmas Holiday – City Offices Closed
- Dec. 12 – Teen Toy Drive and Potluck



Open Enrollment to Start

Selection for 2020 benefits begins on Friday, Nov. 1. There are two plan changes this year. First, due to federal requirements, the deductibles of the \$2,700/\$5,400 health plan will increase to \$2,800/\$5,600. The city contribution to employees' HSAs on the single corresponding plan will increase to \$1,400. Second, the city is switching to HealthPartners Dental from Delta Dental. HealthPartners offered an additional 2% decrease in medical plan premiums if the city made this change. The insurance committee reviewed the pros and cons and decided to make this recommendation, which the Council voted to accept. Rates for both medical and dental are decreasing, medical by 14.7% and dental by 2%. In addition, the City Council has voted to make up the second half of the city contribution lag found in the 2018 comparable city survey. Thank you City Council!

- Also, HSA limits have increased to \$3,550 for individuals and \$7,100 for families, plus \$1,000 for employees 55 years of age and older.

Reminders:

- You can add PERA Life during Open Enrollment without evidence of insurability.
- If you currently have between \$10,000 and \$90,000 in voluntary life coverage through Mutual of Omaha, you can increase the amount by \$10,000 without evidence of insurability during open enrollment.

Starting on Nov. 1, go to Benefit Hub (<https://connect2newhope.benefithub.com>) and click on the Open Enrollment link for full instructions and all related documents. To complete the open enrollment process, you will need a password for ESS/JD Edwards. If you don't use ESS for timekeeping and don't remember your password or how to access it, please contact Shari Rains.

Lastly, and most importantly, enrollment is each employee's responsibility. Any **employee that chooses not to participate** by the hard cutoff of Tuesday, Nov. 19, at 4:30 p.m. will be re-enrolled in the same plans as the current year, however, any **HSA/Flex contributions will not continue** into 2020.



2020 Budget in Process

The New Hope City Council adopted the 2020 preliminary budget and tax levy at its meeting on Sept. 9 and has been reviewing all department budgets over the last several months. The preliminary 2020 general fund budget is \$15,410,550, which is an increase of \$1,186,438 (8.3%) over the 2019 budget.

Major changes in the 2020 budget include:

- Approximately \$700,000 for adding new swimming pool facility operation back into the budget, however, the majority of the expense is offset by revenue from pool user fees.
- Approximately \$480,000 for wage and benefit increases for employees
- Approximately \$60,000 for 2020 election expenses for three separate elections (Presidential Primary, Primary, and General).

The preliminary total tax levy for the entire 2020 budget, including all funds and debt payments, is \$16,844,716, which is an increase of \$1,543,106 or 10.08% higher than 2019. The majority of the levy increase is for the new pool and park improvement bonds issued in 2018 and 2019. The levy would be 1.36% without the pool/park bonds. Although the tax levy is increasing by 10%, the city's tax capacity has also increased and the estimated tax rate is expected to decrease from 67.49% to 64.55%. The estimated impact to property owners is a 3% increase.

A public hearing is scheduled for Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. to take input from residents and the Council will approve the final budget and tax levy at the Dec. 9 council meeting.



In Memoriam



Our sympathies to:

the family of former New Hope Police Clerk Sara Brody as she passed on Sept. 17,
Jessi Weber and her family for the passing of her mother-in-law on Sept. 30, and
Eric Hanson and his family for the recent passing of his mother-in-law.

Employees of the Quarter

Penny Spitzer, parks & rec. admin. specialist, and Jill Smisek, parks & rec. office specialist, were nominated and selected together (*pictured right*). Not just for the wonderful job they do every day, but also for hosting the annual employee golf tournament which was held in September. Penny and Jill not only handle all the logistics of planning and coordinating the event, they also shop for prizes, prepare delicious food, set up for the event and do most of the clean-up.

Employee Transitions

Boss Departs—As of Oct. 18, we had to say farewell to one of our police clerks, Nicole Boss. Nicole started with the city in January of last year. But as much

as she enjoys being with us, she was able to accomplish a

long-time dream of hers and was recently offered a job with the DEA. We wish her the best of luck and expect her to stop in now and then to say hi. And who knows, given her new profession, our staff might have a chance to work with her on occasion in the years to come!

New Baby Ellingson

Congratulations to GRANDPA Steve Ellingson on the arrival of his first grandchild, Benjamin, born on Oct. 18. (*Grandpa and Benjamin pictured left.*)



Wellness Program

Past Events

Vaccination Clinic – Sept. 24-25

This year Hy-Vee was on-site to offer not only flu vaccines but also vaccines for Shingles and Hepatitis B. 29 employees attended the expanded vaccination clinic.

Upcoming Events

Transitioning to Senior Housing – Oct. 30

Barb Hemberger with Oasis Senior Advisors will walk staff through the process she takes with individuals that are considering a move to senior housing. She will share considerations that families that are assisting with these transitions should make and how we all can better plan for this time. She will also talk briefly about the specific options available in the metro area.

Preparing for Your 2019 Tax Return Preparation – November TBD

Details coming soon.

2020 Planning

The wellness committee will be meeting soon to discuss the 2020 wellness calendar. If you have ideas for topics you would like to see presented on, please be sure to respond to the survey that will be sent out after the final event in November.



Happenings

Commissioner Bus Tour

The annual commissioner bus tour took place on Sept. 10. Almost 40 attendees were taken on a tour of 21 projects throughout the city. Thank you to Brandon Bell, community development assistant, and Jeff Alger, community development specialist, for coordinating the event, and Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater specialist/project coordinator, Susan Rader, parks & recreation director, Jeff Sargent, community development director, Bernie Weber, public works director, and Kirk McDonald, city manager, for their writing and speaking contributions; as well as other city staff that helped make arrangements and host.



Employee Golf Tournament



Parks and recreation staff Jill Smisek, Penny Spitzer and Aaron Thelen arranged for the perfect evening for the employee golf tournament on Sept. 24. And after the downpour that cut the 2018 event short, the beautiful weather was definitely appreciated. In addition to the almost 20 golfers, there were a few helpers as well. Following the golfing, we enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by Jill and Penny.

Following the meal, prizes were awarded and door prizes for everyone. Low Gross – Jerry Wobschall, Jim Cox, Douglas Bistodeau and Warren Bindewald. Closest to Pin: Hole 1 - Susan Rader, Hole 3 - Jeff Sargent, Hole 8 – Jonathan London. Longest Putt: Hole 2 – Jim Cox, Hole 4 – Warren Bindewald, Hole 6 – Val Leone, Hole 7 – Jonathan London, Hole 9 – Kay Myers.

Citizens Police Academy

After more than six weeks of training, 15 residents of New Hope and Crystal graduated on Oct. 9 from the Citizens Police Academy. The academy, designed with the average citizen in mind, gives a behind-the-scenes look at patrol tactics, investigations, narcotics, crime scene processing, juvenile crime, dispatching, court procedures, use of force, canine demonstrations and crime prevention strategies. Congratulations to each citizen that completed the training and thanks to Sergeant Doug Brunner who planned and coordinated the academy.

Employee Recognition Event Announcement

Mark your calendars for Thursday, Dec. 5, 2019. The police department will be our hosts for the evening and will be sharing more information and requesting RSVPs as the date gets closer.



Teen Toy Drive and Potluck



All city employees are invited to the annual Potluck & Teen Toy Drive, which is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 12 at 11:30 a.m. in the Civic Center Conference Room. Please bring a dish to share along with an unwrapped gift, gift card or cash that will be distributed locally to an underprivileged family with teenagers. Sign-up information will be distributed in early November. Contact Brandon Bell for more information.