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News & Views

September 6, 2019

The City of New Hope's Employee Newsletter



Park/Pool Construction Update

Even before city hall was vacated, the demolition company began evaluation for asbestos and soon after started demolition of the old city hall. They had already moved in as close as they could to the building so it was only a matter of weeks before the building was gone. Here is the status of construction:

- Exterior brick on the bathhouse is going up.
- Final walls for the 50-meter pool have been poured.
- Foundation and walls for the mechanical building are being poured.
- Block work for the theatre has started, electrical has been roughed, steel columns set.
- Planning to install steel for the picnic shelter within the next week or two.
- Skate park concrete has started.

Police Station & City Hall Construction Update

Starting on June 27 the city hall move began in earnest. The moving company arrived in the morning and started to transport the previously loaded totes and shelves to the new facility. Employees worked at the old site directing the movers and at the new site unpacking. All the while, crews continued with finishing touches on the new building. Staff and Solution Builders worked through the weekend making sure that the building was open for business on Monday morning, July 1. They also worked to remove anything from the old building that could be repurposed. Much of the furniture was repurposed either in the new building or in park and recreation facilities throughout the city. West Metro Fire was also able to repurpose some equipment for training purposes.

In the new building, while there are still a few items yet to be finished and learned, daily operations feel to be back to normal. Visitors from both within the city and without have lauded staff with compliments on the new space. Much gratitude is owed to staff from throughout the city in helping to plan, move and modify the space to make it a functional and beautiful place to work. Special thanks to public works for the many trips before and after the move to remove and replace items. A grand opening will be planned for the fall once a completion date of the parking lot is known. Concrete pouring of the sidewalks began last week.



Mark Your Calendar

Sept. 10 – Commission Bus Tour
Sept. 24/25 – Flu Vaccination Clinic
Sept. 24 – Employee Golf Tournament
Sept. 25 – Wacky Wednesday

First Council Meeting

City Council and staff held their first council meeting in the new building on July 22. Several residents attended and the new space worked well for council members and staff alike.

City Project Updates

In addition to the construction happening at Civic Center Park, there are many other projects ongoing throughout the city.

- New street lights have been installed on 42nd Avenue between Louisiana and Xylon avenues with new banners as well.
- The Winpark Drive reconstruction is progressing despite rain delays due to the wet season early on in construction.
- The Jaycee Park playground equipment has been installed and site work completed. Turf needs to be established.
- The Windsor Ridge development is well underway. Three building permits have been issued for new homes and the developer hopes to have them ready for occupation before the end of the year.
- The new construction at the 5212 Pennsylvania Avenue scattered site location will proceed once the lot sale is approved.
- The contract for the scattered site rehab project at 3924 Utah Avenue has been approved and rehabilitation is proceeding.
- The Hy-Vee drive-thru kiosk on the west side of the current building has been approved and construction will occur this fall.
- Lastly, but not least, the 2020 preliminary budget has been completed and will be reviewed in detail with the city council over the next several months before final adoption in December.



Employee Spotlight – Gina Karstens

Join me in welcoming our most recent employee, Gina Karstens. Originally from Des Moines, Iowa, Gina has called Champlin home for 35 years. She has training in financial advising/planning but her most recent position was at Concept Machine and Tool where she worked with the sales team as their administrative specialist, also supporting their executive team.

Gina and her sister both really liked Minnesota and thought the Twin Cities seemed like an exciting place to be, so her sister moved up to the big city and Gina followed shortly after. Her mom just moved to the area, while her Dad is still in Des Moines. Gina has 4 children. Justin lives near Buffalo, works in nuclear robotics and has 4 children. Josh lives in Otsego, works at a local packing plant and has 2 children. Brandon is a newlywed in Minneapolis and works for O'Reilly. Taylor lives in Champlin and works for Three Rivers Park District where she works in administration and outreach.

Gina's significant other is Bret Heitkamp, city administrator for the city of Champlin. Bret has 3 children that all live in the area as well. Gina and Bret spend a lot of time at their lake house on Spirit Lake near Okoboji, Iowa, where they are often joined by their children and grandchildren. When they are not on the lake, they enjoy traveling. They have an annual tradition of traveling to warm and sunny locations during the cold winter months. The past few years their destination has been Mexico, last year to Cabo where they whale watched amongst other outdoor activities. They look forward to the annual Fall Colors tour and "Up-North Trip" every year in the fall and ice fishing trip in the winter. They are also big Twins and Gophers fans and traveled to Fort Meyers Beach, Florida for Twins Spring Training and to Chicago to see the Twins vs White Sox game. When she's at home, Gina enjoys being creative. This summer she has enjoyed applying that creativity to gardening, while she says she is still learning and would like to expand her knowledge and learn more.



Employee of the Quarter

Valerie Leone, city clerk, was chosen as the 2019 Employee of the 2nd Quarter. Her nominator wished to recognize her work with city staff and vendors in coordinating the move in the new city hall and police station facility. Val worked hard to make sure that everyone knew what to expect throughout the process and worked with other staff to make sure everyone's needs were met. She did this while completing the tasks of her regular position and the extra work she was already doing as liaison between Wold and the management staff for the city hall/police station construction. Congratulations Val!

Employee of the Quarter Nominations Sought

Reminder...nominate one of your outstanding co-workers for Employee of the Quarter today. The deadline is Monday, September 30 by end of day. Forms can be found at I:\Forms (EOQ Nomination Form) or by contacting Human Resources.

Employee Transitions

Nickelson Departs—Andrew Nickelson's last day at the city was August 11. He had been serving New Hope for almost four years as a community service officer. Andrew will be working for a private firm that installs and maintains commercial fish tanks. We wish Andrew much success in his new career! External recruitment for the CSO position vacancy left by Andrew began this week.

Gass to Retire—Carol Gass, accounting technician, has announced her plans to transition to the next phase in her career, retirement! She plans to finish with the city in March of next year. Recruitment for her replacement is underway so that Carol has time to train on the many tasks she does, including year-end reporting.

Recruitment Underway—The external recruitment period for both of these positions is now open. If you know of someone you would recommend, please direct them to the city webpage, newhopemn.gov/jobs.



In Memoriam

Our sympathies to the family of Diane Reuter, former community service officer, who passed away on July 28.



Happenings

Summer

Employees have been actively taking advantage of our beautiful Minnesota summer by hosting and being a part of many outdoor/summer activities. Here are a few of them.

Police Explorers Fundraiser at Now Mart – Aug. 1

The newly open Now Mart on Bass Lake Road hosted a BBQ fundraiser to help the Explorers raise over \$1,000 towards new uniforms and equipment.

(continued on page 4)



Happenings (continued from page 3)

Wet & Wild Day – Aug. 2

Many area residents joined in at Lions Valley Place Park in Crystal for giant water slides, kiddie slides and sprinkler fun jointly hosted by New Hope, Crystal and Robbinsdale Park and Rec departments, along with West Metro Fire-Rescue.



National Night Out – Aug. 6

This ever increasingly-popular annual event saw over 80 block gatherings throughout the city. Thank you to the uncountable hours that Officer Nichole Korth and many others put into helping residents organize safe and successful neighborhood events. Residents appreciate the visits by police and fire personnel as well as city staff and council members.

Safety Camp Hosts over 70 Youngsters! – Aug. 13-15

Congratulations to city staff and volunteers for hosting another successful three-day event. The primary staff involved were as follows:

Safety Camp Coordinators: Nichole Korth, police; Aaron Thelen, parks & recreation; Shelby Wolf, West Metro

Safety Camp Leaders: Jared Kuyper, Britni Austin, Pat Beaumaster—police; Olivia Schmitz, Meara Molitor, Elizabeth Rohe—parks & recreation; Andy Nichols, Eric Grimes, Eric Enselein—West Metro

Other city staff: Kaitlyn Baker, Keith Beise, Laurie Dube, Erick Dyer, Tim Fournier, Kyle Goldman, Todd Hesemann, Jill Smisek, Penny Spitzer, Marty Williams, West Metro firefighters, and staff from both public works and parks & recreation. Plus many additional other police and parks & recreation volunteers!



Happenings



West Metro Fire-Rescue Auxiliary Fundraiser – Aug. 15

Continuing in their efforts to bring the community together to support local efforts, NowMart hosted another BBQ fundraiser with the West Metro Auxiliary. Many staff were again seen at this event, some of which may have gotten a little crazy. See Beth Kramer, city manager admin specialist, and your truly, Walker MacBeath, the Jolly Journalist, testing out the photo ops.



Cop on a Rooftop – Aug. 16

Police department staff went ABOVE and beyond in their fundraiser in conjunction with Dunkin' Donuts. This year they raised over \$1,000, meeting their goal set at last year's event. The funds raised go to Special Olympics Minnesota.

**Special
Olympics**



Public Works' Employees Volunteer at Minnesota State Fair – Aug. 29

Bernie Weber, public works director, and Megan Hedstrom, storm water specialist and project coordinator, volunteered at the Eco-Experience educating state fair goers on leading a more sustainable life with easy, everyday reduce-reuse-recycle how-tos. The exhibit was presented by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota State Fair.



As a reminder—



Hands-Free: Now the Law in Minnesota

Governor Tim Walz signed a new hands-free cell phone bill into law April 12 to help further reduce distractions behind the wheel.

Starting Aug. 1, drivers are no longer be able to hold their cell phones in their hands. They are able to use their phones to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, but only by voice commands or single touch activation without holding the phone.

Remember, hands-free is not necessarily distraction-free. We want Minnesotans to stay safe, stay alive and stay out of trouble under the new law.

Visit HandsFreeMN.org for more information.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

What can I do under the new law?

The new law allows a driver to use their cell phone to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, but only by voice commands or single-touch activation without holding the phone.

What can't I do with my phone under the new law?

You may not hold your phone in your hand. Also, a driver may not use their phone at any time for video calling, video live-streaming, Snapchat, gaming, looking at video or photos stored on the phone, using non-navigation apps, reading texts and scrolling or typing on the phone.

Can I ever hold my phone?

Yes. Hand-held phone use is allowed to obtain emergency assistance, if there is an immediate threat to life and safety, or when in an authorized emergency vehicle while performing official duties.

Can I use a GPS navigation device?

Yes. GPS and other systems that can only be used for navigation are exempt from the Hands-Free law. In-car screens and systems are also exempt. In both cases, most of these systems lock when the vehicle is moving.

If my teen is under 18 years old and has a driver's permit or provisional driver's license, can they use their phone in hands-free mode?

The new hands-free law does not change anything for teens under 18 with a driver's permit or provisional driver's license: They cannot make or answer calls while driving (hand-held or hands-free).

Does the new hands-free law address smart watches?

Drivers can use them as a conventional watch to check time, but smart watches are considered an electronic communications device under the hands-free law. That means the device has the same restrictions as a cell phone. Drivers can use a smart watch the same way they use a cell phone as long as it's by one-touch or voice activation. Drivers can't type, text or do the other things prohibited under the hands-free law.

Does the new law apply to law enforcement agencies?

Under the new law, hand-held phone use is allowed in an authorized emergency vehicle while performing official duties. However, some agencies have taken a proactive approach to reduce or eliminate hand-held phone use. For example, the Minnesota State Patrol has instituted a policy that requires troopers to use their phones only in hands-free mode.

Unfortunately, there are circumstances in which emergency vehicle drivers need to be on their devices to carry out their duties. Although this is different than situations other drivers find themselves in, the dangers are the same. We're well aware of those dangers from a law enforcement perspective and are encouraging people to follow the law regardless of whether they have an exemption.

Couldn't I get distracted by my in-car screen or other distractions like eating, grooming, pets, passengers or reading a book? Why aren't they covered?

Yes, there are many possible distractions when driving, but cell phone use presents a unique and complex challenge and is addressed by the hands-free law. A driver is still expected to avoid other distractions and drive with due care under other Minnesota traffic laws.

Are there penalties?

Yes. The first ticket is \$50 plus court fees and the second and later tickets are \$275 plus court fees.

(Edited to meet space requirements.)



Wellness Program

Past Events

Well-Adjusted: Ergonomics for Back and Neck Health – July 24

25 employees participated in the luncheon and stretching activities intended for those that work much of their day in a sitting position led by Dr. Tom Bomberg of Bomberg Chiropractic. Following the luncheon, Dr. Bomberg toured the new city hall and police station working with staff to adjust their chairs and desks as needed for healthy posture. A common mistake many employees were making is positioning monitors at a level that required their heads to be tilted at too much of an angle downward. While it makes it harder to see our colleagues over the monitors, it's great to see that so many are still heeding the good doctor's advice.



Annual Summer Picnic and Games in the Park – August 21

Grilled brats and burgers prepared by Dave Lemke, Mic Rusk and Rich Johnson were enjoyed by 32 employees on a beautiful summer day in August. Following the lunch several door prizes were given out and several games of bag toss were played. A familiar rivalry with a familiar outcome is depicted in the nearby photos. (Pictured left: Jeff Sargent, Community Development Director and Kirk McDonald, City Manager; pictured right: Eric Piper, Inspector and Eric Hanson, Inspector)



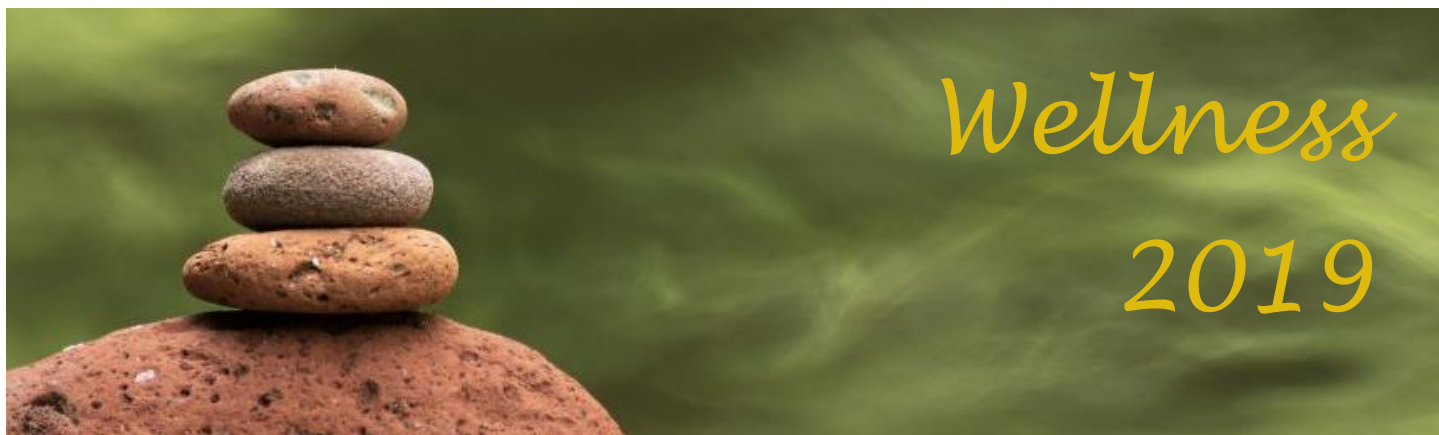
Upcoming Events

Flu, Shingle and Hepatitis B Vaccination Clinic – September 24-25

As requested by staff, we will be expanding our vaccination offerings this year to include Hepatitis B and Shingles. We will again be partnering with Hy-Vee. You may receive all three vaccinations on the same day. See posters in employee work areas for details.

Fitness Room Personal Consultations – September/October

We are working to find a paid trainer that would be willing to come in and provide one-on-one consultations as a Wellness benefit. If you have suggestions, they are welcome. Please let Walker MacBeath, HR coordinator, know.



Additional Recycling Options

You might have seen these signs (to right) on bins in your lunchroom areas. Jessi Weber, community development admin specialist, started and is facilitating this program to aid city employee efforts to be environmentally responsible. Please be sure that any plastic that you throw into these bins is clean and has had any non-plastic materials removed.

Wacky Wednesday/Food Pantry Donations

Thus far in 2019 staff has delivered 402 pounds and \$600 to NEAR. The next Wacky Wednesday is Sept. 25.

PLASTICS RECYCLING

-GROCERY, DRY CLEANING, AND RETAIL BAGS
(REMOVE ALL STRING TIES AND RIGID HANDLES)

-BREAD, PRODUCE, AND CEREAL/CRACKER BAGS
(DRY WITH ALL FOOD REMOVED)

-STRETCH/SHRINK WRAP AND PACKAGING WRAP
(FROM PAPER TOWELS, PAPER PLATES, ETC.)

-WATER SOFTENER BAGS
(WITH RIGID PLASTIC HANDLES REMOVED)