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N O R T H C O L L E G E H I L L
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N E W S L E T T E R
A P R I L , 2 0 0 8

After suffering through the State of the Union, State of the State, and State of the City addresses, we figured we would do something a little different. What if we tell you everything we know about our City and you decide what our "state" is? Would you like a hint? Darn good!!!

We have a New Year, a new Charter and soon a new school. We are looking at new horizons, new opportunities and new challenges. I don't know about you, but I'm excited at the possibilities. **This is the Renaissance. It's here and we are all part of it. So.....Let's roll.**

CHARTER

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!!!! Thanks to the 60% of our residents who voted, we are now a charter form of government. That means we have our own home rule. "We the people", make the decisions that affect our future. Congratulations to us. A quick review of the changes that have already been made include the establishment of position of City Administrator who is now directly in charge of and responsible for the day-to-day operations of all departments. There will be no gray areas anymore. There will be a Finance Director who must have financial qualifications. In addition, there will be a Recreation Director to co-ordinate the various programs and facilities of our new Recreation Department. Yes, I said "New". We had a Recreation Commission with no real Department. From now on, the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals will have a design professional on each. Now, we citizens have the opportunity to amend our Charter without waiting for those people in Columbus. Congratulations!

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Shortly before last Christmas, two events occurred in our City, which should make us angry as hell! A young man was murdered simply because he went to work. Our prayers and sympathy will continue to go out to his family. Then, some members of Boy Scout Troop 393 were robbed while raising money by selling Christmas trees. These actions are cowardly and heinous, and they must be held in contempt by every citizen in our City. If you do not feel personally abused, insulted and downright sick about things like that happening in our City, then I hope you accept my personal invitation to leave! We are a better City than that. The good news is that the suspects, except for one, are NOT from NCH.

The bad news, of course, is that it happened here. Can we stop it? The cold, hard fact is no! We cannot stop criminals from passing through our City. Bad things happen. However, as citizens, we all must work together to create an atmosphere which, if and, when bad things happen; it is the exception, not the rule. I am proud of the work of our Police Department on these cases. The perpetrators of these crimes have all been indicted. I applaud long and loud the co-operative spirit of our citizens that played a large roll in their capture and arrest. Public involvement is crucial to success on any level. To this end, we are forming a "Task Force" of citizens to come together and brainstorm a bit.

POLICE DEPARTMENT (continued)

They will consider how we, as citizens, effect change in attitudes, public involvement and co-operative spirits among groups within our City. We hope to discover ways we all can make a difference. Stay tuned.

Mayor's Court heard 2,191 cases in 2007 with over \$165,000.00 taken in on fines and court costs. You may find it interesting that the Ohio Supreme Court is once again pushing the state legislature to abolish Mayor's Courts. Those people are totally crazy. However, it looks like there will be a compromise reached that will keep the courts but we Mayors will not be allowed to officiate at them. Oh well, it appears there will be more work for the attorneys around the state. Funny how that works.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Civil Service test for the new fire chief was held on April 5, 2008. The reason for the delay was a result of requests by those persons interested in taking the test for a reasonable time to study. We felt this was an acceptable request as this test is not easy and the result affects us all. So, good luck to all of those who are taking it. 2007 was another busy year for our Department. We had 1,221 ambulance runs and 338 Fire runs. Thanks to all members of the Department.

PUBLIC WORKS

How about the job our guys did at Christmas? We thought we were in trouble when we had to remove the trees on Hamilton Avenue but our dynamic crew came up with the solution that looked great. We received many terrific comments from visitors and citizens alike. Speaking of Christmas, as most of you may know, we have a Nativity Scene inside the LaBoiteaux cemetery during the season. We would really like to expand and or upgrade this display but due to constitutional issues, we cannot spend public money on it. So, if you would like to help us expand our display, please call Pete at City Hall (521-7413) and let us know what you can give. It will be greatly appreciated.

The weather has been real crummy with the recent snow and ice this winter. Nevertheless, you can count on our guys to be out in it, keeping our streets clear. I may be just a little biased but we have the best. Guys, we all appreciate your efforts and Thank You! And, let's hope this round of winter weather doesn't grow those cute little pot holes that we all know.

Welcome to Matt Beggs who is our newest member in the Public Works Department. We're glad to have him and wish him luck.

STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

GET READY FOR MORE DIRT! There must be something in my childhood, but I love to see people move dirt. Well, this year I'm not going to be disappointed. To all of you on Kleindale, Simpson, and the 2000 block of Emerson, it's your turn. You'll have lots of mud, dirt and discomfort but at the end, beautiful streets. Also, look for an OK from the State for grants to do Norman Avenue. This project may not start until late 2008 but it looks good for us to get the money. Hamilton Avenue has been approved by the state for the repaving so get ready for some interesting traffic challenges. See, that's the politically correct way of saying that it is going to be a royal pain until it's completed. However, that's OK. We'll have smooth streets in the near future.

INCOME TAX

The Tax Department had a banner year on 2007. Collections topped \$2,400,000.00! Special efforts were made to collect delinquent taxes, and there were nearly 500 taxpayers cited to court for failure to pay their NCH income tax. The result? Over \$325,000.00 in delinquent taxes were collected! Did you know that the Tax Department staff will calculate your NCH taxes at no charge? This is just another great service offered by the City.

RECREATION

Big changes here. The charter requires us to have a recreation director, and the job does not require a full time person at this time. This will affect the makeup of the Recreation Commission because the director is an ex officio member of the Commission. That is a fancy way of saying he/she attends the meetings, but can't vote. The charter also shifted the responsibility for management of the Recreation Department, programs, and facilities to the City Administrator. This allows the Commission to dream a little and come up with future programs, initiatives and good old-fashioned ideas that will improve our recreation programs within the City. In the past, the Board not only had to come up with the ideas, they had to manage the facilities and deal with personnel issues, etc. Now it's clean and direct with a clear line of accountability.

If that's not enough news, try this one. We are near to entering into a contract with the YMCA to manage our pool. This is HUGE!!! While it is a great facility, the pool is a drain (pardon the pun) on our physical and fiscal resources. Many, many hours are spent on the pool from both an everyday operation standpoint and internal management standpoint. The YMCA knows how to run pools and comes with marketing programs and fresh activities that can be implemented at the pool. The hours will be expanded to seven days a week, noon until 9:00 P.M. This means that you can now come to the pool after work and cool off. There are other things in the works that will enhance your visit to NCH pool so make plans to buy a family pass. **NOW THE GOOD NEWS.** You probably have jumped to the conclusion that it will cost an arm and a leg because it's the "Y". Wrong-O!!! **The City maintains control of the admission price and we do NOT anticipate any major change.** Therefore, the pool will improve and the price will remain very affordable. It will remain your neighborhood pool. Let's all plan to get wet.

This year, the Rec Commission, in conjunction with the YMCA, will be analyzing the number of and types of programs we can offer our citizens. Adult exercise, water aerobics, expanded basketball programs; and a skateboard park have been suggested. It's going to get interesting but it won't work without your involvement. PLEASE, it is your City ... whether you are a new citizen or long time resident. Just like Uncle Sam ... WE NEED YOU! Call City Hall if you think you would like to be involved in anything. It takes a little time but the rewards are great. Call Pete at 521-7413, and tell us what your schedule is so that we can build a database of people willing to help.

SCHOOL/CITY

Get ready for some big, big news. You know the great citizens of our City approved the bond issue last November making it possible for us to build an entirely new School campus in NCH. The impact that it has already had and the potential for the future is outstanding. The most important factor is the chance our students will have a great learning environment and our teachers will have an opportunity to offer programs that were previously impossible. There are, however, additional benefits. The morning after the election results were final, I received two phone calls from prospective developers with whom we have been communicating. They said it was now obvious our City was serious about going in a forward direction and they were now interested in becoming part of it. That's big! There has been further movement since November (keep reading) some of which is a direct result of that election.

SCHOOL/CITY (continued)

By the way, NCH passed the bond issue with largest plurality of any similar issue in the state of Ohio. I think we should be proud of ourselves.

Now for the surprise

The School and City Administrations have been discussing the future of Becker and Clovernook Schools. The new school layout would be greatly enhanced if they could utilize some land that currently belongs to the City. The land encompasses some of the area adjacent to their parking lot and the area that currently houses the City's Public Works Department. We have been discussing options and we are very happy to announce that the School Board and City have reached an agreement in principle that will result in a "swap" of land. The City will give the School Board the area necessary to facilitate the ultimate site design for the new schools in exchange for the Clovernook School. There are lots of details yet to be thought through, but this is an unprecedented display of co-operation between public entities. After considerable study, it became clear that with a reasonable renovation expense, the Clovernook School can house the relocated Public Works Department along the east side of the existing School, while the majority of the building will be converted into the North College Hill Community Center. You didn't misread that. Our Community Center is close to becoming a reality ... ***With no increase in taxes!*** All it took was a lot of innovative thought and a whole bunch of co-operation. This will not happen for another 2 1/2 years until the schools are completed but that gives us time to work out the details and programs. Now you see the potential importance of an organization like the YMCA being involved with us. It's been a busy few months.

Look for the celebration of our champion students. Galbraith and Hamilton have been designated "Avenues of Champions", so we are going to display the photos and names of the Honor Roll students who have achieved a GPA of 3.5 and higher in the windows of City Hall and any other businesses in town willing to display them. It's time to start celebrating academic excellence.

Congratulations to all our teams this past year. They did really well including the Bowling Team that reached the state finals. Our Boy's Basketball Team reached the Regional Semifinals before losing to Anna High School 76-63. That ended their remarkable streak in the tournament of 25 straight wins. Just a little note to our students: You carry the school colors home with you every day. That means you and your school are being judged by the way you conduct yourselves on and off campus. Let's act like first class people in and out of school. The world is watching!

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This is yet another area that has all of a sudden burst open with possibilities. The difference now is the fact that there are real projects with real money on the table. Ground has been broken on the new attorneys building on Galbraith. If the monsoon season ever ends, we can really get something done. Projected completion was May 30, 2008 but the weather is not co-operating. It can stop snowing and raining any time now! Council has officially adopted the Comprehensive Land Use Plan so we now have the document for which some interested parties were waiting. Linda Fitzgerald, our Economic Development Consultant, has been busy. She has been involved in the relocation of Ms. Patricia Baas, Attorney who is renovating the old Demming Pharmacy Building, and should be moving in this May. Linda has also attracted a new developer to town who is beginning his renovation of the former Laundromat on Galbraith Road that will become professional offices. And, finally, she has been able to move Walgreen's off the dime. They have completed their designs, made agreements with PNC, and will start construction this summer with the hopes of being open within 12 months.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (continued)

I have saved the best for last. A deal is close to being completed at the old Thriftway site. Negotiations have been going on for at least a year and have been one of the most anticipated events in town. Offers have been tendered and accepted. This is a large deal with lots of details to work out, so we're waiting and hoping it all works. Say a prayer and light some candles. There has been a lot of activity and hours spent on putting this deal together but Linda Fitzgerald has earned her keep on this one. The spin off effect of this will be significant. This is an exciting time to be in NCH. In the next 3 years, there is potential for over \$50,000,000 in construction. You read it right. That's six zeros behind the 50. Just think of all those jobs. I told you, I just love to see that dirt move.

HOUSING

While we have a lot going on in several areas, we cannot forget or ignore that our City is made up of a variety of neighborhoods and that the strength of the whole is only as strong as the parts. The point is, we need to pay special attention to our neighborhoods. We have some new legislation that will facilitate our enforcement and I'm lobbying Council for more hours for expanded property maintenance. But here's the deal: we can pass all kinds of laws and hire a bunch of people, but, it takes the involvement of us, the citizens, to make it work. If someone needs help, **OFFER**. Maybe the people are too proud to ask, **SO GET INVENTIVE**. Maybe they never lived in a real home before and simply don't know what to do. **TEACH!** Maybe they are just jerks and they're satisfied to destroy the neighborhood. **CALL THE POLICE OR CITY HALL**. In this last case, there may not be much we can do, but we'll try. But for goodness sake, don't be an ostrich and put your head in the sand and hope it passes by ... it won't. Get involved!

The epidemic of foreclosures is a blight on the neighborhoods across our nation. I could spend a whole newsletter talking about this subject but let me try to summarize and make some suggestions. Our local concerned citizens group has been trying to get a handle on this problem and confronting the scourge of predatory lending. Other citizens have researched and have come forward with ideas relative to reaching out to those persons who, through no fault of their own, find themselves on the brink of losing their home. We as a City, through several agencies such as Center for Local Government, Ohio Municipal League, Hamilton County Municipal League, the First Suburbs Consortium and the Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission have been trying to reach a solution to this problem. The cynical side of me wants to say that no wonder we haven't found a solution, we have too much bureaucracy involved. One model has, however, emerged in Cleveland. The United Way Fund has stepped up to the plate and designed the Foreclosure Prevention Program. Unfortunately, it didn't work until they established a place dedicated to taking calls from people in trouble before they lost their house. We are pursuing this direction through the County. If you find yourself in a tentative situation, call the Hamilton County Housing Opportunities Made Equal for advice Bill Hanks or Stephanie Willits at 721-4663. If you are facing foreclosure, there is free help available through several local agencies, so call us at City Hall and we can give you that information.

You've probably been reading about those \$1.00 homes that are being bought by some municipalities. We are involved in this program with a twist. The deal with these houses is that they need to be fixed up and then sold. The average cost of fixing up looks to be about \$60,000-\$70,000. The City must then sell them. Well, have you checked out the rate of unsold homes around the country lately? So, we have decided to team with Cincinnati Housing Partners who will act as the City's agent. We avoid the liability and get the job done. Look for this to happen later this year.

HOUSING (continued)

On the horizon is an initiative for new housing types in NCH. We are talking with a couple of people interested in developing new “neighborhoods” within our City. It is in the formative stages but it will include homes and housing types that will enable us aging folks (how’s that for being politically correct) to stay in town and not climb stairs or shovel snow. This will take some time, but it is now on the drawing board. The reason for the interest ... the new schools and our location. Enough said.

RECYCLING

North College Hill Residents Recycled 258.86 Tons in 2007!!!

Congratulations North College Hill residents! In 2007, you recycled 258.86 tons of metal, glass, plastic, and paper. Your recycling efforts benefited the environment and the local economy in a big way.

The recycling efforts in North College Hill saved the equivalent of:

- 2,277 trees
- 11,020 gallons of gasoline
- Enough energy to power 32 average homes for an entire year
- 215 tons of greenhouse gases - equivalent to removing 171 cars from the road

Recycling reduces pollution so the air we breathe is cleaner, conserves natural resources so we will have them to use in the future, and decreases the amount of waste going to the landfill. Recycling also boosts our local economy by creating 169,000 jobs and \$6 billion in annual wages just in the State of Ohio.

On average, each household in North College Hill recycled 124 pounds in 2007. That’s a lot of pop cans and newspapers! If you would like to see even more material recycled in 2008, check out the list below to make sure you include all these materials in your recycling bin. Don’t have a bin? North College Hill makes it easy! Call 242-4600 to request your bin today!

Good Work, North College Hill, your recycling efforts made a big difference!

Recyclable Materials:

Plastic bottles and jugs (remove lids)
Glass bottles and jars (remove lids)
Magazines, catalogs, and phone books
Empty aerosol can (remove lids and tips)
Paperboard (cereal boxes, etc.)
Aluminum and steel cans

Brown grocery bags
Junk mail and envelopes
Newspapers
Cardboard
Office Paper

Have a question about recycling? Call Hamilton County’s Recycling Hotline at 946-7766 or visit www.hamiltoncountyclecycling.org.

BITS AND PIECES

We are looking to replace the trees on the islands along Hamilton Avenue. If you are interested in buying a memorial tree, it will cost \$450.00. A plaque will be displayed in City Hall and eventually in the Community Center with the names of the donors or those memorialized. We're planning on using Armstrong Red Maples. Call Pete at 521-7413 at City Hall for further information.



Congratulations to Ryan Moeller, a junior at NCH Senior High, took first place in a recent regional marketing competition. Other juniors, Scott Gundrum and John Brandon, finished in 3rd place in their respective divisions.



For the record, I have not had a chocolate chip cookie in two years. It's killing me but... I guess my doctor is happy.



It's a long way off but mark your calendars for the NCH Alumni weekend. It all starts with a "Get Together" at Fricker's on Friday, September 12, 2008 from 8 pm - ? There will be a dance at Lakeridge Hall on Saturday, September 13, 2008 from 8 pm - midnight, \$25.00 per person - reservations required. For details, contact Linda Thiunnes Braunwart (Class of '67) at 522-9058 or e-mail her at lindabnch@yahoo.com. There are many alumni living here in town and I'm sure you know some others who have lost their way and moved somewhere else. Let them know and watch for announcements as it gets closer.



The North College Hill Senior Center needs your help!

The North College Hill Senior Center is looking for dependable volunteers for their Meals-On-Wheels program in order to serve our homebound seniors. The home delivered meal program is growing leaps and bounds. In order to continue serving our area seniors, they need your support. Volunteers, the core of their program, make it possible for many of our seniors to remain at home and independent, preventing premature placement in a nursing facility.

No experience is necessary, only a willingness to open yourself to a wonderful opportunity. The rewards of giving are endless. If you can spare an hour a week or even a month, there are many smiling faces waiting for you! They even reimburse for mileage!

For more information about joining the family of volunteers and seniors, please call the North College Hill Senior Center at **521-3462** and ask to speak with Brandy May, the Meals Program Coordinator. *Thanks for your support!!!*



Well that about does it. Time flies when you're having fun! Did you know that NCH will be 100 years old in 2016? It sounds like a long time but it is only 8 years away. So what will our City be like then? The crystal ball reveals what we will call **VISION 100!** Imagine a city that is accessible to the entire population of Hamilton County within 15 minutes. A city where people can live in harmony, peace and safety. A city that has eliminated the word "minority" from its vocabulary or any other hyphenated description of nationality because we are all equal and proud citizens of North College Hill. A city that is united by a series of walking and bike trails. A city that boasts of a first class school system with relatively new schools, a student body that has achieved academic excellence and whose students set examples of achievement and character. A city that has an active business district that has been able to meet the needs of a changing economy while preserving the atmosphere of small town U.S.A. A city where people talk to one another, not at one another. A city who offers a community center that enables all citizens a chance to communicate with one another regardless of age, sex, race, creed or political preference. In addition, a city that recognizes the importance of faith and devotion to a higher being while respecting the rights of those who answer to a different drummer. Sound like a crazy dream? Surprise! Everything mentioned above has been initiated. The vision is clear; all we have to do is see it through. You've been kind enough to allow me to be Mayor of this great city and I am greatly appreciative ... **THANKS!!!**

Just a thought:

"The happiness and prosperity of our citizens ... is the only legitimate object of government"

- Thomas Jefferson



north college hill, ohio

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