

Mayor's Newsletter
October, 2006

The rebirth of North College Hill, that's the main issue in this newsletter. There are two issues on this November's ballot, and two more that are important steps in the North College Hill Renaissance. They are big, important, challenging, and a little scary. You'll find we have changed the format in order to try and give you as much information as possible on these issues. Hope you find it helpful. So, grab that beverage and a Snicker's, and let's go.

RENAISSANCE

According to Webster's Dictionary, this means "a rebirth; a new dawn". In North College Hill, this word is the future of our City. The last five years have been frustrating for almost everyone at City Hall, and we are darn sure they've been frustrating for you as well. It seems that we have been faced with making choices between bad and worse. Through it all, however, we've been planning, praying, and positioning. Planning for action, praying things would finally fall into place, and positioning ourselves to take advantage of opportunities when they presented themselves.

The two very important issues that will impact the future of North College Hill are the continuation of our extremely successful Road Levy, and the formation of a charter commission. Both are non-political, so we will discuss them in this letter. The other subjects will be "Economic Development", which is at the core of the Renaissance, and our schools. All of these issues affect the quality of every aspect of life in our City, and the future paths they will take. This may sound like an overstatement, but it is true.

CHARTER

On the November ballot, the question will be asked, "Do you wish that a Charter Commission be formed?" If you vote yes, then your next vote will be for the members of the Charter Commission. There will be 15 names and, to make it easy, you vote for 15. The Commission is made up of 15 people representing a wide range of citizens from every socio-economic background that exists within in our city. You will notice that there are no existing Council members on the Commission. That's because state law prohibits any current elected council member to be on any Charter Commission. I haven't the foggiest idea why, but that's what the law says.

So, what is a charter and why do we need it? First, it is a totally non-partisan, non-political issue, which is why we can discuss it here. A charter is essentially a set of rules by which we run our City. Currently, the rules we live by are those that have been drawn up by legislators in Columbus, most of which are ancient. (not the people but the laws) some of which are irrelevant, and none of which did we have realistic input in making. Having said that, a new charter may be as simple as adopting what we now have and continuing on our way. Realistically, this may be a good way to start because we are not re-inventing the wheel. So, why change? One very big reason: Once a charter is adopted, it is ours, the citizens of North College Hill. We, and we alone can change it, adjust it, tweak it, and make it fit for us. To make changes, ALL citizens have input and the general electorate must vote on any proposed change. A charter allows us to look at our local government and adjust the way we run it that best fits our needs and circumstances. Just because some other City in the State of Ohio does something doesn't mean we should or could. We are the Hill, and we deserve the right to

govern ourselves. It also gives our future citizens the ability to be flexible and react to the changing times that lie ahead. Right now, we do not have the opportunity to do that.

Next question is “What will change?” As I said earlier, nothing has to, but consider the following. Did you know that to be the treasurer or auditor in N.C.H., you don’t have to have the slightest bit of financial background or education? But for the grace of God, we have been blessed by wonderful, qualified, and dedicated people that have stepped up and done the job. But think about it! What happens if somebody doesn’t? Our City is a business with a \$3.5 million dollar budget, not counting the various funds that generate an additional million dollars/year. Do you want someone who has no experience or education in finance to run the finances of our company? Would we be better served with more Council members, or less? Should elected officials serve longer, or shorter terms? Should there be term limits? I don’t know, but I do know that we as a city should have an opportunity to discuss these questions and others that impact our future and the efficiency with which our City is run. By voting for Issue 31, you will be giving the Charter Commission the opportunity to write a Charter for our City so that we can vote on it next year. Remember, a positive vote for Issue 31 will merely allow the Commission to be formed and to start writing.

Charters have been adopted in 185 out of the 251 cities within the State of Ohio, a percentage of 73.7, and each one was written individually by their citizens, just as ours will be. Please vote to form the Commission. It is an extremely important step in our Renaissance.

ROAD LEVY

One of the best and most influential things we all did many years ago was to pass our road levy. Most of you know, but for the benefit of our newer citizens, in the past 15-20 years, we have been able to repair, reconstruct, or replace over 80% of our streets, sewers, and curbs. We have been unbelievably successful at obtaining matching grants from the State of Ohio, which have resulted in doing approximately \$13 million dollars worth of work, while spending \$4.3 million of our own money. Why have we been so successful? On top of having knowledgeable employees and effective engineers, a large part of it is due to the fact that, thanks to the funds made available by the levy, we come to the table with cash. This is a big plus. We implemented the long-term plan in 1988, and have been successful ever since. Now, the really good news. This will not increase your taxes! The issue is not asking for any more than we are receiving already. NO INCREASES, it is a simple renewal. So, please vote for Issue 30, the North College Hill Road Levy Renewal. The money stays at home and helps continue the progress.

On that subject, we just received word that we will receive funds to reconstruct Cordova Avenue. To those folks on Cordova, get ready, here comes the dirt.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This is the cornerstone of the North College Hill Renaissance. It is very important to note that we are speaking of “Economic Development”, not just Business Development. So, what is the difference? Quite a bit. If we are truly to be successful as a city, then all of us, both residential and commercial citizens, must reach economic success. For the non-residential sector, this means creating an atmosphere into which people from throughout the area want to come and work, shop, and spend their money for the goods and services found in our city. For us private residents, it’s not quite so simple, but, nevertheless, just as critical. For most of

us, our house is the largest investment we will ever make. That means the property value must be maintained or increased in order to maintain a viable citizenry. It is the dual responsibility of citizens and their elected government to work together to make that happen. Sounds simple on paper. We've obviously been working for years on this subject, but we now have the people in place to coordinate the multitude of factors necessary to make it work. Lynda Fitzgerald has been hired by the City as our Economic Development Coordinator. She started in mid-July and she comes with a record of success.

Here's the plan. Through a series of private and public meetings, we will be communicating with businesses and residents to gain a clear vision of what we want our City to become. Once the information is gathered, a land use plan will be adopted, describing the intended use, for instance retail, office, residential, mixed use, or green space. The next step is to invite developers and other interested parties to partner with us in soliciting users. This includes residential redevelopment.

You need to know these important things as well. First, some of this activity has already started, and Lynda has already started laying the groundwork for it. She is a dynamo, and we are all going to have to run to keep up.

Second, this is not a six-month project. It will take time, probably 5-7 years to complete the North College Hill Renaissance, but watch closely and you will start seeing little signs. The Credit Union at Hamilton and Galbraith is one. Also, we are in the mix of potential sites for the new F.B.I. building. Yes, that's right. Thanks to Lynda, our name is still in front. This is a stretch but, hey, we have a lot to offer, especially location. I have spoken with two large residential development firms that have expressed interest in North College Hill.

Third, this process will take courage and commitment from all of us. There will be many changes and we all must be aware of that. The only constant in life is that it changes.

SCHOOLS

The number one reason people move to or from a community is the quality of the schools. It came as a blow to my ego, but people do not move to or from a community because the mayor might be a nice guy or a jerk. It's SCHOOLS, personal safety, and recreation facilities/programs, in that order. This probably comes as no surprise to you, but I have had the opportunity to discuss our city with three of the larger and more successful residential developers in the area, and they all said within 5 seconds, that schools are IT. Our city has several very important attributes that exceed most other communities, such as location, convenience, and great citizens. However, all this doesn't mean much if we lose our schools.

Unless you live in a cave, you know that we lost an important element in our city's fabric this past summer when St. Margaret Mary School was closed by the Archdiocese. This was tragic. While several other schools were closed, it is hard not to take that move personal. Nevertheless, it's done, and we must move on.

We are blessed with the presence of our own North College Hill School system, but we cannot just assume that it's always going to be there and be good. Frankly, there are some bad perceptions about our schools, some of which may be well founded. But I'll tell you this much, I've never met a more dedicated and professional staff of educators in my life. The teachers are first rate and care deeply about our kids. However, is it fair to expect them to be

day-care providers, disciplinarians, dieticians, recreation directors, life counselors, quasi-parents, and, oh yeah, educators? This is what we are asking them to do, and for the most part, they do it without complaint. It is a fact and we need to realize that our Renaissance will fail miserably unless we experience the same rebirth within our school system.

So what can we do? Well, when is the last time you went to school with your child or spoke to his or her teacher? When was the last time you volunteered to help in any way? How about going to a school board meeting. We elect them all and I'm sure they would love to see and hear from you. How about P.T.O? You know you don't have to have a child in school to belong. Join the boosters and BOOST. Attend as many functions as possible. Applaud and encourage success in the classroom as vigorously as we do on the field or court. To that end, I am initiating a Scholar's Hall of Fame, which will be displayed at a prominent place in North College Hill honoring those who have gone on to make a difference in our society. If the past few years have taught us anything, it's that we have pride and spirit and can unite into a powerful force if focused on a goal. Well, what's more important to our children, our families, our community, and our country than quality education. It's time, let's MAKE IT HAPPEN, STARTING NOW!

NEWS OF NOTE

We hope that the shortage of jail space will soon end. Due to that shortage, we cannot realistically have our safety reinforcement program in effect, which lessens our ability to have more police on the street. The good news is, Councilman Snyder discovered a way we can realign our court fines, so that the money can go into the General Fund, and thus into the Police Department Personnel Budget. This will start in October. There are two other operational changes we have come up with, so, bottom line, we have to be able to increase our coverage very soon.

Congratulations to Officers Kelly, Mohr, Kodish, Miller, Shrand, Jones, O'Connell, Manning, Sgts. Kidd and Ferguson, as well as Specialist Fritz, for making a potentially fatal incident into a successful and harmless ending on July 30. Way to go guys!

Welcome to Margi Hood, our new City Auditor. She has deep North College Hill roots and a financial background. Good luck to Margi, and find us some money. We all owe Nick Link a big thanks and good luck in a well-deserved retirement.

Another welcome to our new Administrative Assistant, Chris Schadel. Chris is part-time for now and what a worker. He is a graduate of Moeller High School (we'll forgive him for that), Ohio University, and has attended post-graduate classes in Public Administration at Miami University. He served us last year as the interim Clerk of Court and did a great job. So, I guess, welcome back. Come on in and say hi!

As mentioned, we received a \$545,795 grant from the State of Ohio for Catalpa and might get yet another before the end of the year. Please vote for the renewal of the levy. Remember, it is a renewal and will NOT raise your taxes.

Winter is coming and along with the colder temperatures comes some more bad news, FLU SEASON! Whether you consider yourself healthy or just hate needles, getting a flu shot can help keep you and the ones you love from getting sick. If you would like to find out where

you can get a flu shot, call the Hamilton County Health Commission at (513) 931-SHOT, or go to their website, www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org.

Interested in North College Hill history? Well, the last Saturday of each month at 11:30 a.m. at the Hilltop Methodist Church on Galbraith Road is the place. Dues are cheap (\$10/person), so why not join the N.C.H Historical Society? If interested, call Sue Benzinger at 522-3934 for details.

We are sad to report that David "Davey" Taber passed away on October 7. "Davey" was probably the most beloved citizen of our city and knew everything that was going on around the neighborhoods. Every Department in our City knew Davey and could count on being informed as to how well things were going. We'll all miss him !

Happy Birthday to N.C.H. Bakery. Carl and Anna Litschgi opened at 1807 W. Galbraith Road in the spring of 1937 and the bakery is still there. Happy 70th.

Congratulations to the Greater Cincinnati Credit Union on the opening of their beautiful new facility. It looks great and thanks for starting the ball rolling.

Welcome to the newest business in town Ja Je Do Hair Salon at 1817 ½ W. Galbraith Road.

Good luck to Lori Fischer who is the new owner of Kathy's Place.

There are several things in the works at the old Thriftway property. Don't look for anything real soon, though.

A big Thank You to all those involved in this year's Community Picnic. It was a huge success and everyone did a great job. Again, thanks.

Speaking of property, Dick Weber, our code enforcement officers, is now back concentrating only on property maintenance issues. He did a great job helping out in the front office, however, we really need him to not divide his attentions. But, we did what we needed to do at the time. We are coming back.

Tuesday, November 7th is election day. As you can tell by this newsletter, two issues on the ballot are really important to the future of North College Hill.

We are very, very sad to report the death of Specialist Robert Weber who was 22 years old. He was killed near Mosul, Iraq. His mother and aunt live on Rob Vern. Kathy, your son died so that we can enjoy our liberties and way of life. I urge all our citizens to keep Specialist Weber and his family in your prayers.

Let us know about anyone you may have in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan. I know, I now have three members of my family in Iraq and it is a constant worry. So, if you can give us an address, perhaps we can drop him or her a line from the Mayor.

Halloween will be celebrated October 31, 2006 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Please drive carefully, and watch out for the little goblins.

Farewell and good luck to O.J. Mayo. O.J. decided to return to Huntington, West Virginia to finish his high school career. It was good to get to know him and we wish him all the luck in the world. It's great to still have Bill Walker staying here. Even though he won't be on the court, having Bill here is a plus for our community.

The N.C.H. Boys Football Team is doing great this season. Go Trojans!

Good luck and study hard to all of our students and teachers this year. You are our future. To the teaching staff, I invite you not to be shy in asking for help. Feel free to call us at 521-7413 and keep us informed. We are here to help if we can,

Well, that's the news this time. I know that the format was a little different, but it's important for you to know the Issues. We have achieved much, experienced more, and learned a lot over the years. We are now putting what we have learned to use. We have a great city with a great future. Together, we can and will achieve our goals. As always, thanks for the privilege of being your Mayor. See you next time.

JUST A THOUGHT "Whoever wants to reach a distant goal must take many small steps"
Helen Schmidt