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O C T O B E R , 2 0 0 8

It wasn't a tornado but, why do I feel like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz? This is North College Hill, not Kansas. Did somebody forget to tell the Big Guy that we're not supposed to have hurricanes? We were in the middle of writing this newsletter when Hurricane Ike paid us a visit and as a result, we kind of changed the format. So, obviously, we have a lot more to talk about. Ready? Let's go!.

THE STORM – First, let us hope that this newsletter finds you and your family safe and sound and any damage is minor. One family suffered a devastating fire due to the storm and our prayers go out to them. Obviously, we all feel bad about the tragic loss of life in Mt. Healthy and pray for her family as well. We are glad to report that except for a few isolated instances, North College Hill fared pretty well. Our citizens showed great resilience and, in most cases, unbelievable patience during a week of distress and discomfort. Thanks to all of you. I went through the City on the Sunday evening of the storm and witnessed extensive tree damage, roof and shingle damage and more than a few blocked streets. Our Police, Fire and Public Works Departments acted professionally, efficiently and decisively in the hour of collective need and we should all be extremely proud of each and every one of them. As for the cleanup, the decision was made immediately even before the storm had ended that we were going to clean this mess up no matter how long it took. After seeing the amount of damage, we knew it was going to take some time. Here's hoping that by the time, you get this newsletter, your yard and your life are back to normal. You know, I still can't believe we were hit by a hurricane. It is simply unbelievable! Maybe in 2009 we should have a citywide hurricane party.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Thanks to all those of you who called City Hall and left very nice messages regarding the extreme visibility of our Police during, and immediately following the storm. Many of you said that it made you feel safe during a very terrifying time. Again, if you see one of our cops, say thanks, they appreciate the fact that you notice.

A huge thank you also is extended to the Citizens On Patrol that assisted the department during the power outage. Many team members were out directing traffic and assisting with other departmental requests.

One of our officers that may prefer a biscuit as opposed to thanks is Niko, our K-9 officer. Niko, as you may recall, is the private dog of our Officer Schrand and has become quite the celebrity. Besides playing a vital role in our crime enforcement squad, he has a nose that won't quit. He can sniff out drugs ... even if hidden inside vehicles ... leading our officers to the hiding place. Niko has literally taken a "bite" out of crime in NCH. (I apologize for that but I couldn't pass it up) Anyway, if you are a member of a group and would like to see Niko and Officer Schrand in action, please call the Police Department and we'll see if arrangements can be made for a demonstration. I must admit, a few years ago a few of the officers tried to talk me into starting a K-9 unit, and I was not in favor. Well, after seeing what he can do, I've changed my mind and admit that I was wrong. See, you can teach old dogs new tricks!

Several of our Officers have received commendations and very complimentary letters over the last few months and we are very proud of them and the Department as a whole.

We are considering reinstating the walking beats. Due to manpower, it is difficult to get back to the bike patrols (my personal favorite) but we think we can make the walking beat work. So, if you see an officer walking down the street, his car wasn't stolen, he's just trying to get up close and personal. We are continuing our crusade against drugs, drug users and drug dealers in our City. The fact that we have such activity in our City is not good but at least it is far less than other communities. We need and will keep trying to eliminate all such activity in our City.

FIRE DEPARTMENT – Congratulations to Brian Fels, our new Fire Chief. Brian is a graduate of North College Hill High School and is a career firefighter for the Cincinnati Fire Department. As most of you know, the Chiefs' position in North College Hill is a part time position so, obviously, the Chief needs a full time job. He and his wife, Julie have a newborn daughter named Lacie, and they reside in Harrison, Ohio. Brian has stated that his goals are to continue to improve the service to the citizens of NCH by stressing training, pride and dedication to the profession. He believes in leading by example and we feel we couldn't have a better example than Brian. Good Luck to him, his staff and the entire department as we head into a new era in the history of the North College Hill Fire Department. Wouldn't it be nice to re-start the Firefighters Festival!

We will be purchasing a new aerial truck next year at a cost of \$650,000.00. That's a lot of money but the money comes from a fund that we build through the years with the money collected from the Insurance Companies for our ambulance runs. We currently use this money to keep upgrading our equipment so that we don't deplete the General Fund. It is something we started several years ago and is an efficient use of our funds.

Hats off to our firefighters during the storm. They fought the fire on Dallas Avenue and were able to keep the blaze from spreading throughout the neighborhood during the high winds. Thanks also for all the help we received from other departments. That could easily have been a major disaster. Also, our people have been going through town doing what they can to help clear trees out of the roadways. Unfortunately, if there were power lines involved, we couldn't touch them. Again, thanks to all our firefighters.

PUBLIC WORKS

What can we say! Once again, our **Fabulous Five** just keeps on going. During the height of the storm, our guys were out there with backhoes, saws, and tools to try to keep us going. "Heroes" is too humble a word to describe their actions. In the days and weeks following, they are still out there trying to clean up. North College Hill, thanks to the hard work of our Public Works crews, is picking up all the debris as long as it was between the sidewalk and curb. I hope that by the time you read this, your debris is long gone but there is a lot of "stuff" and it takes time. We leased the chipper through the end of October. Anyway, if you see our Public Works guys out there, say hey and Thanks for a terrific job.

Other than the storm debris, our City looks good. We weren't able to do the flower baskets this year due to funding, but we are trying to budget for next. Cross your fingers. We went with the red mulch this year and it looks great. The Hamilton Avenue Islands took a little time to complete due to conflicting projects and a temporary shortage of manpower but our landscape experts, also known as Public Works got them done and it was worth the wait. Thanks to all those individuals who donated the flowers to help our City look beautiful. Maybe someday we could have an endowment just for landscape. Just a thought in case you were interested.

The first impression of our City is vital in attracting new residents as well as business. I know you've heard it before, but, I continually receive heartfelt compliments from those visiting our City for the first time as to how nice it looks. My buttons almost burst every time. In late October, we are hosting a very important meeting of officials from all over the county. They chose North College Hill and Clovernook Country Club because several members have been here before and loved our City, the friendliness of our people and our location. Shoot, we already knew that, didn't we?

STREETS AND HIGHWAYS

Welcome to the street repair capital of Hamilton County. The last time I checked, North College Hill has the highest rate of street and infrastructure repair per capita of all cities in the County. Keeping up that tradition, we will be finishing Norman and Emerson Avenues this year and have eight, that's right, eight projects ready to be applied for next year. They are, Bobwood, Norcol, Bake, Goodman, Carpenter, Pin Oak, Griesmer and Claretta. We will not get all of these but we stand a good chance of getting two or three. That's fantastic! The bad news is a lot of dirt will fly so get ready. A big "Well Done" to the John R. Jurgensen Company for the job they did on Hamilton Avenue. They did a great job with a minimum of disruption. I sure expected a lot worse.

FINANCE

We are still searching for a Finance Director, but in the mean time, our elected Treasurer, Bill Lammert, has gone above and beyond the call of duty. I don't know what the procedure is to nominate someone for sainthood, but I'd nominate Bill. He's pulled a few miracles out of his hat already and has really helped us stabilize our finances. Pete Tunnat, our Administrative Assistant, has stepped up and is applying his talents to assist Bill and it is working very well. We thank them both.

INCOME TAX

There's a new face in the Income Tax Department. Jana Cromer comes to us from the City of Harrison, with 30 years experience in local finance and taxes. Jana retired in 2007 but has agreed to assist the Tax Office on a part time basis. She'll be concentrating on locating apartment move-in/move-outs and changes of address for taxpayers. Welcome Jana, and good luck.

For the past few years, the department has made a concerted effort to locate delinquent taxpayers and bring them into compliance. This is a tough job. Many moved in and out of our City without meeting their tax obligation. Locating these taxpayers is no easy task. Hundreds of cases have been processed through the Mayor's court and those taxpayers are now paying taxes. Nevertheless, the work is paying off! Already in 2008 \$479,718.43 has been collected in delinquent dollars!

You will be receiving a post card in January notifying you of your obligation to file an annual return with North College Hill. Due to budget constraints, tax returns will no longer be mailed to every taxpayer. Forms will be available on line at www.northcollegehill.org or you can call the office to have a form mailed out to you. The office is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 – 5:00 if you need assistance in completing your tax form. Just call us at 931-1159.

RECREATION

This has been an interesting year so far. As you know, this was the first year we contracted with the YMCA to manage our pool. As expected, there were and are still some growing pains and we will be analyzing these over the winter. It seems that most things went well but communications and management styles need to be coordinated. We encountered some glitches but nothing communication can't solve. Imagine that, talking to one another. What a concept! Seriously, so far, it looks pretty good and overall, we're pleased. The "Y" has agreed to manage our basketball program and will be starting a junior football program, too. This is really exciting because it expands our youth services.

I am hoping that by the end of this year, the Recreation Board will have completed their five year plan. I will be announcing that in the next newsletter.

The Community Picnic was a great success again this year with great weather and impressive crowd once again. Thanks to all those people who worked so hard to make it a success. Also, big thanks to all of our sponsors.

Upcoming events to look forward to are:

- NCH Craft Show on November 8th at the Senior Center from 9:00 – 2:00. Call 521-7413 for a reservation ... only \$25.00.
- Along with the Fire Dept, the Recreation Commission is hosting a "Breakfast with Santa" on Saturday, December 6th from 8am to 11am at the NCH Senior Center. Santa will be there for pictures and there is a \$5 per person admission charge. Breakfast will consist of pancakes, eggs, bacon, sausage, orange juice and milk. This is a great time for kids and adults.
- The 2nd annual 80's Dance will be held on February 7, 2009 at the VFW from 8:00 – midnight. Pre-sale tickets can be purchased until February 6th for \$15.00 per person. After that, it goes up to \$20/person. Call 521-7413 for more details.

On Memorial Day weekend, 2009, we will officially be re-naming our pool the Ashing Family Memorial Pool in honor of Charles "Whitey" Ashing and his family who still dedicates time, energy and money to our City. "Whitey" Ashing was instrumental in getting the North College Hill Pool funded and built. His son, Charlie graduated from NCH High School, and his wife, Deanna is also a NCH native. They remain very active in North College Hill and Charlie is the current President of the NCH Alumni Association. The Ashing Family deserves this honor and we are anxious to make it happen.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This is a mixed bag. There is good news and bad news. Let's get the bad out of the way.

The most disappointing news was the decision by the Lowe's Company to back off their proposed development at the old Thriftway location. The deal was done except that the economic climate turned so bad that the corporation decided to suspend any expansion throughout the country at this time. The person in charge said and I quote, "Until people stop spending more money putting gas in their cars than they are in our stores, we're not going to build anything." Needless to say, we were EXTREMELY disappointed. They had the plans drawn, zoning set and everything worked out and then the economy tanked. This is the third time in the last eight years major projects have been scrubbed due to the economy. We're getting real tired of this.

We've had numerous inquiries about the vacated Regency Nursing Home property. The owner of the property intended to raze the existing structure and build a new, state of the art nursing facility. That's great except that the State of Ohio denied them of their license and it has been in and out of court for the past few years. That is why we have seen no action. It is now being appealed to the Supreme Court. Meantime NCH is stuck with a property that is a mess. The property has been disintegrating for some time and has reached the point of becoming a public nuisance. We are beginning the proper legal procedures to eliminate this annoyance. There are several options which include demolition, rehabilitation or re-development. All of these options take time to accomplish through the "system" but we must start.

Enough of the bad, now for the good news. Our anticipated new businesses are now open for business. The new building at 1714 W. Galbraith is the offices of the attorney group of Ennis, Roberts and Fischer. They moved here from downtown and took occupancy of the building on September 12. We welcome them to NCH. Another attorney has opened her offices at the former Deming Pharmacy Building at the corner of Galbraith and Bake. Welcome to Patricia Baas. By the way, she has already expanded her office force when she moved into her new offices on June 16th.

While it's not a new business, the Corner Café is under new ownership and is now known as Frieda's Corner Café. The food is good and Frieda said she is from Kentucky and knows how to make good grits. That's all I needed to know. Hey, that's heart healthy isn't it? Welcome and good Luck to Frieda who has also expanded her hours and is now open from 8:00 A.M. everyday.

The long awaited Walgreens/PNC Building will be going up this winter with an anticipated opening in the summer. This will finally fill out the main intersection of town. We are still hoping to add a decorative material to the cemetery wall to enhance the appearance of the intersection.

The Budna Grille has been sold and will be remodeled into a fine restaurant. Good Luck to Ken and Marie and thanks for the memories. The Budna was a landmark for many years and will be remembered fondly. Good Luck to Chris Hoeweller, an NCH grad, who has purchased the building. The name will be Van Zandt's and, for those of you new to the area, Galbraith Road was originally known as Van Zandt. The new restaurant will be a great place to dine and get a refreshment. With some outdoor dining being planned, we won't be limited to that other place in College Hill. Look for a lot of NCH memorabilia at VanZandt's. This might be a great place to locate the NCH Hall of Fame.

The City will be attempting to obtain grants to purchase vacated properties to aid development, both commercial and residential. We feel pretty good about our chances and think it would make a difference in attracting developers. Of course, right now, very few people are doing anything. But, that means we have to follow through with our plan and be ready when the economic climate is better. We need to be postured to take immediate and decisive actions when the time is right.

Also, the groundbreaking for the new schools took place on September 12th and it was a great and historical event. So, in the next 2 1/2 years, you will see the new campuses arise as we all take part in the NCH Renaissance.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT

The recent and on-going financial crisis that is going on across the nation is obviously affecting us. We all know about the vacant and or foreclosed home problem and at the latest accounting from the county, we had 78 vacant and/or foreclosed homes as of January 1, 2008 in North College Hill. I'm afraid with the ways things are going, that number will increase. Thus, we are stepping up our involvement with Cincinnati Housing Partners to help stem the tide. The problem is that the rate of foreclosures is going faster than we can respond.

All residents should have received a recycling flyer from Hamilton County Solid Waste Management District. If you do not have a recycling bin, please do your part and recycle. Your efforts will pay off by reducing the amount of material going into the landfill. Besides, the bins are free!!! Call 521-7413 to receive your bin.

We have increased the staffing at the Property Maintenance level by adding a second person to the staff. John Fulmer, the former Police Chief is now handling the field work, while Dick Weber is handling the correspondence and paper work. This way they can promptly respond to problems. I have recommended to Council that property maintenance violations be treated the same as traffic citations, that is, your second violation is a fine which is payable immediately. Each subsequent fine will increase so repeat offenders get higher fines. Second, those properties that are vacant must have inspections before renting the premises to insure that minimum code standards are being adhered to by the landlord. Third, that if property maintenance issues persist, that the subject properties be deemed a "Public Nuisance" and Council proceed with actions to eliminate the nuisance. If the property owner does not respond, the city will "fix" the problem and place a tax assessment on the property to pay for the necessary repairs. These recommendations apply to both residential and commercial. NCH was GREAT, is GREAT and will continue to be GREAT if we work together!

The County announced that approximately \$8,000,000 would be made available to local communities to help eliminate foreclosed or vacated homes. There still are many details we don't know but be assured we're going after our share. We'll keep you posted.

Just a reminder that owning a home doesn't stop with making the mortgage payment. I learned the hard way, as most of us have, that paying the rent is the easy part. It requires constant work such as cutting the grass, weeding the gardens, taking the garbage out to the curb each week, and in general, just keeping your property in good condition. It's not that hard and/or expensive if you just do it as a regular weekly chore. More importantly, it is the neighborly thing to do. If you know someone who is elderly or infirmed, lend a hand to help. You will be helping yourself, helping your neighbor and helping your neighborhood.

Speaking of neighborhoods, do you know that there is an active Adopt - A - Block program in NCH operated by our Community Concerns Group? This is a volunteer effort through which citizens, be they young or old, can take positive steps in cleaning up our City. This pertains to private citizens, business owners or our citizens. The program simply requires that you take "ownership" of a block and keep it clean. You do not go onto private property, but keep the sidewalks, curbs and other public places clean of debris. Even if you cannot take part in the program, you can help by not mowing over large pieces of paper or other materials thus making little pieces out of big ones. Young folks between the ages 8-18 are eligible to receive certificates for service hours, too. If you are interested, please call City Hall at 521-7413 to adopt a block to register, and our Community Concerns Group will be notified.

While we're on the subject of blocks ... hey, parents ... when the kids are playing in the street, make sure to tell them that they don't own the block. We've been getting some complaints, actually more than a few, regarding children not yielding to traffic in the street. I know what I used to do when playing stick ball in the streets of Bridgetown, but I also remember that when my father found out, it was the last time I did that! So, please remind your child to be courteous and safe.

BITS AND PIECES

- Congratulations to North College Hill School's Administration, Teachers, Staff and Students. The Schools achieved a rating of EFFECTIVE this year from the State of Ohio. This is great news and proof of the commitment to excellence that these folks have for our schools and community. It's just another step in the Renaissance.
- As mentioned, you will be seeing a lot, and I mean a lot, of construction around town starting this spring. First, be careful of the construction traffic. Second, most of these folks will be visitors so let's put our best foot forward.
- Congratulations to James Geers. He is our newest Planning Commission member. He is an architect so, naturally, is a great guy. He was one of the designers of the new school campus and lives here in NCH. He replaces Sarah Headley who was transferred to Indianapolis. Welcome aboard, James.
- The Crime Stoppers program of Greater Cincinnati would like us to get more involved with helping to stop crime. Claudia Nieman is Vice President of the organization and is local. She says it is an easy program to be involved with, takes very little time and has big returns for the neighborhood. For more info, call Claudia at 931-1219
- An important and painless issue is on the ballot this year. The Great Oaks Vocational School District, of which we are a part, is asking for a renewal. The great news is that it won't raise our taxes. 33% of NCH juniors and seniors attend either Diamond Oaks or Scarlett Oaks, so it is a great investment in our future. This is non-partisan and, again, will not raise taxes, so I urge you to strongly consider this levy.
- The Charter is working and James Geers is an example of how it works. As you may remember, the Charter requires that a member of the Planning Commission be a design professional, so, thus we have one.
- Halloween will be held on October 31 from 6:00P.M. – 8:00P.M. Again, be careful of the little ghosts and goblins.
- November 4 is Election Day. This is obviously a historic election one way or the other and it is essential that everyone who is registered, votes. Our Country's future is literally in the balance and a lot of people have fought and died for our right to have a say in it. Please vote!
- Does anyone have a tree we can use for the community Christmas tree at City Hall? If you would be interested in donating a tree to become the City's Christmas tree, please call Pete at 521-7413.
- The best deal in town is our Historical Society. They meet the last Saturday of each month at 11:00 a.m. at the Hilltop Methodist Church. They have really interesting meetings, great road trips, and on costs \$10.00 to join. Call Sue Benzinger 522-3934 at for details.

Well, that about does it for now. It's been an interesting summer with some low points but, as always, there are reasons some things happen and things always work out for the best. We are gaining momentum and the hard work that so many have done and continue to do is not in vain. We will be seeing a lot of "stuff" going on and up in the next couple of years and when the economy finally turns around, we'll be ready. So, once again, I thank you for allowing me to be the Mayor of the greatest City on earth and be part of the most exciting time in our history. See you next time.

Dan Brooks, Mayor

Just a thought:

"Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen." - **Michael Jordan**



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