



FALL 2005

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THE CITY OF
DUBUQUE

Showing the Spirit.

a publication of the City of Dubuque

Five Flags Civic Center's Renovations Revealed



A "re-grand opening" was held at the Five Flags Civic Center on Oct. 7, 2005 following the completion of numerous renovations. The center's HVAC system was replaced, all the bleachers replaced, and the upper and lower promenades and Bijou Room renovated. The Locust Street entrance was reconstructed, new windows installed on the east and west entrances, and new concession stands (with expanded menus) added on the first and second floors. Additionally, a dehumidification system was added to the arena and 70 tons of chilling capacity added to the ice chiller. The Five Flags' ticket office at the Locust Street entrance can now be open when the building is not.

Municipal Services Center

The City of Dubuque held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, September 30, at the new Municipal Services Center at 925 Kerper Court. The services housed in the facility include: street maintenance, sewer maintenance, four solid waste collection services, street and traffic signs and lights, fleet vehicle maintenance (including transit buses), riverfront/floodwall maintenance, and water distribution.



Municipal Utility Referendum Vote on November 8

On August 15, 2005, the City Council voted to place the following question on the November 8, 2005, ballot in response to a petition submitted by a citizen's group called OpportunityDubuque:

"Shall the City of Dubuque, Iowa, be authorized to establish a municipal utility to provide communications services, including but not limited to local exchange telephone services, long distance telephone services, Internet access services, and television services?"

The Dubuque City Council unanimously passed a resolution in support of the referendum at its September 6, 2005, meeting. The resolution stated:

- Whereas, placing the question on the ballot is without cost or financial encumbrance to the City or to local citizens; and
- Whereas, the authorization of the City to establish a communications utility does not obligate or require any future action by the City; and
- Whereas, placing the question on the ballot is a logical extension of local government designed to further study, assess, and evaluate the merits of a municipal communications utility ...
- The City Council of the City of Dubuque supports the passage of the ballot question authorizing the City of Dubuque to establish a communications utility and encourages voters to vote in favor of the ballot issue.

In its August petition requesting the referendum, OpportunityDubuque said, "OpportunityDubuque is a citizen-led movement helping our community learn about a communications utility as essential infrastructure. The goal of OpportunityDubuque is to help educate our citizens regarding this important topic, and to take the first step by establishing a communications utility via a referendum vote this November 2005."

"OpportunityDubuque does NOT currently support any plans to finance, build or deploy a communications utility. Rather, we are working to ensure that our community has the OPTION to do

so should it be proven feasible and appropriate. Establishing this logical extension of local government (the utility) will merely allow the community of Dubuque to further study, assess, and investigate whether the construction and/or operation of such a utility is indeed feasible and appropriate for our community."

If the voters approve the referendum authorizing the City to establish a municipal communications utility, the taxpayers will not have any financial exposure. In order to obligate property taxpayers to any financial commitment for a municipal communications utility, a second referendum requiring a 60 percent voter approval would be held. Currently, there is no intent to seek such a second referendum or to obligate any City funds.

An in-depth and objective market analysis and technology feasibility study of the creation of a municipal communications utility feasibility study was conducted by Vernon Research Group, Virchow Krause and Company, and Columbia Telecommunications Corporation this past summer. Over 400 Dubuque residents and 100 businesses were surveyed regarding the telecommunications needs.

The feasibility study report states, "The Internet has changed the way we teach, learn, conduct business and communicate. This transformation has just begun and as it continues to develop, the Internet will become less of a luxury and even more of an integral part of our lives. In order to ensure the development of the availability of high-speed Internet, municipal involvement may be required."

The preferred result of this process is that Dubuque's current private telecommunications providers will offer state-of-the-art, affordable, universally available services to Dubuque residents and businesses.

Please vote on November 8.

—City Manager
Michael C. Van Milligen

City Begins Process to Acquire Federal Building



The United States General Services Administration (GSA) has decided to dispose of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, also known as the Federal Building at 350 West 6th Street in downtown Dubuque. Prior to conducting a public auction, the GSA has offered the building to the City of Dubuque at no cost; however, if the City acquires the building, it must be maintained to Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitating historic buildings. Also, any income generated from the building must be reinvested in the building.

At its September 6 meeting, the Dubuque City Council gave its approval for City staff to move forward with the application process for the City to acquire the building. The City hired Anderson Design in June to provide an evaluation of the building and identify necessary renovations. Planned City usage of the building includes City Council chambers and the possible relocation of the Housing and Community Development Department from 1305 Central Avenue.

The U.S. Postal Service is the primary tenant of the building, occupying the first floor, and has no plans to relocate. Other tenants rent office space on the second and third floors. Currently, the building is approximately 20 percent vacant and the City would seek additional tenants to increase occupancy.

Advantages of the City's purchase of the building include:

- City ownership and control better complies with the intent of Federal requirements for historic monument conveyance of the building.
- Prevention of the building from falling into a greater state of disrepair.
- The building's second-floor courtroom would be a more functional City Council Chambers, with adjacent cable broadcast control room and conference room space.
- Meeting space for City Boards and Commissions.
- Relocation of the current Council Chambers would provide the Library with more space to accommodate their programs.
- Investment in the Federal Building would be a better real estate investment than putting additional money into the existing Housing and Community Development Department building to provide much needed space for that department and to make it accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Improved parking/safety access for citizens using services of current Housing and Community Development Department offices.



If the City acquires the building, it must be maintained to Secretary of the Interior's standards for rehabilitating historic buildings. Also, any income generated from the building must be reinvested in the building.

If you are interested in leasing office space in the Federal Building, please contact the City of Dubuque Economic Development Department at 589-4393.

Q & A: Dubuque's Street Assessment Program

It's a busy time within City government as the Fiscal Year 2007 budget process is underway. One of the major expenses (7.9%) of the budget is dedicated to the repair of some of its 291 miles of City streets.

How are streets selected for improvement?

In the fall of each year, Public Works Division staff begins driving each and every City street and establishes a rating from 1 to 100 as to the condition of that street. The rating scale from 1 to 100 (100 being the best condition) is determined on criteria established by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

With these ratings, coupled with traffic counts and weight load statistics, City staff determines those streets that can be repaired by either asphalt overlay or reconstruction based on available budget dollars.

When does a street become assessable?

Once the City Council approves the street program, the projects are referred to those departments that will manage the project; i.e., the majority of asphalt overlays projects are not assessed and are handled by the Public Works Department while some asphalt overlays and all concrete reconstruction projects are managed by the Engineering Department through private contractors. The condition of the street and base are determining factors. No matter what type of street work is done, City departments coordinate closely with the major utility companies on the project scheduling.

An asphalt overlay of a street is considered maintenance or rehabilitation of the street surface only; i.e., extending the life of the street surface. Historically, per City Council direction, such work has been covered with City funding.

Reconstruction projects, on the other hand, are more comprehensive. Such work includes the complete removal and replacement of base, pavement and curb as well as the repair of other street infrastructures such as sanitary sewer, storm sewer, watermain, sidewalks, curb and gutter, etc.

In April 1983, the City Council adopted a policy for sharing the cost of reconstruction between the City and residents, and those properties within that neighborhood. Although City funding is utilized, a portion of the remaining costs are borne by those property owners that derive the greatest benefit in the form of a special assessment.

Who receives an assessment?

Any property owner whose property abuts the improved street or that is located within 300 feet or half the distance between the streets, whichever is smaller. Only that portion of the residents' property that falls within these limits is assessed.

How is an assessment calculated?

The method for assessing property owners in the City of Dubuque divides up the lot into units and applies a percentage or weighted value to each unit based on its distance from the street. The basic philosophy is that properties along the roadway shall pay a higher percentage of the assessable cost while properties farther away will pay less.

The calculation takes into consideration other such factors as different size lots, vacant lots versus lots with houses, commercial

versus residential property, and the type of street (primary, secondary, collector, arterial). By state law an assessment cannot exceed 25 percent of the value of property plus improvements. Also, by Council directive, the cumulative assessment cannot exceed 25 percent of the property value plus improvements. This directive comes into play when a property is assessed for multiple streets, sanitary sewer, sanitary sewer lateral, water service or sidewalk in any 10 year period of time.

How does a property owner learn about his or her assessment?

Once the City Council approves the year's annual street program, the Engineering Department develops plans and specifications to complete the work. The impacted property owners are invited to an informational meeting to discuss the scope of the project, the estimated project costs, construction phasing, timing, general assessment information, availability of financial assistance, and to provide input regarding the project.



Based on this information and review of the project by other City departments, the Council is asked for its approval to initiate the project. After receipt of that Council approval, a letter to each property owner is sent with a preliminary assessment. This estimated cost provides the impacted property owner the opportunity to plan his or her finances to pay his or her share of the street infrastructure improvements.

When does the property owner pay the assessment?

Once the project has been completed and the final cost of the street improvement is approved by the City Council, the final assessment will be sent to the property owner. This final assessment is based on the actual cost of the contractor to complete the work. If the cost to do the work is more than the original estimate, then the City bears this cost; if the cost to complete the project is less than the estimate, then the individual assessment is lowered accordingly.

Since the City realizes that such assessments may cause a financial burden, the City does provide financial assistance options to low-to moderate-income families. Local Option Sales Tax funds will provide 20% to 100% relief of the street assessments for eligible owner-occupied property. Also, if the property owner wishes, he may opt to pay any special assessment of \$100 or more in 10 annual installments at an annual interest of nine percent (9%).

For additional information on the City of Dubuque's street assessment program, please contact the Engineering Department at 589-4270.

"Medicare and You" Sessions Planned for November 9 & 10

The City of Dubuque and numerous local agencies will sponsor two free informational sessions on the new Medicare prescription drug coverage that will be available to Dubuque area seniors with Medicare beginning in January, 2006. Enrollment begins for Medicare prescription drug plans on November 15, 2005.

A "Medicare and You" session will be held on Wednesday, November 9, from 2-4 p.m. in the Harbor View Room at the Diamond Jo Casino. Another session will be held on Thursday, November 10, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Park View Room at the Dubuque Greyhound Park and Casino. There is no cost to attend and all current Medicare beneficiaries are encouraged to attend one of the sessions. The Diamond Jo Casino and the Dubuque Greyhound Park and Casino are funding both events.

Representatives from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will conduct both sessions which will begin with a presentation of information and conclude with a question-and-answer session. Staff from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) will also be on hand to assist attendees and provide information on how to sign up for the new program.

Remember, enrollment begins for Medicare prescription drug plans begins on November 15, 2005 and coverage starts January 1, 2006. This coverage provides protection from high out-of-pocket drug costs and is available to all people with Medicare. Coverage is available for both brand name and generic drugs and people with Medicare can choose between at least two prescription drug plans to pick the plan that is right for them. People who have limited income and resources may qualify for extra help with the cost of their coverage.

For more information on the "Medicare and You" sessions on November 9 and 10, please call Elaine Cullen, Outreach Coordinator for Project Concern, at 563-588-3980, ext. 102. For details on the new Medicare prescription drug coverage, contact Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit www.medicare.gov.

Are You Prepared for a Disaster?

It's easy to think that your needs will be taken care of when a disaster strikes, but do you have a plan?

Disaster Supplies Kit

The American Red Cross recommends that you build a disaster supplies kit. There are six basics you should stock for your home in the case of an emergency:

- water
- food
- first aid supplies
- clothing and bedding

- tools and emergency supplies
- special items for medical conditions

Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to carry container. Possible containers include a large, covered trash container, a camping backpack or a duffle bag.

For a comprehensive listing of items to consider for a disaster supplies kit, visit the American Red Cross website at www.redcross.org.

"Holiday Tag" Distribution Begins November 14

The City of Dubuque continues its annual distribution of a complimentary "Holiday Tag" for excess refuse to its solid waste customers. Distribution begins Monday, November 14, 2005, and end Friday, December 16, 2005.

Customers requesting the Holiday Tag for themselves, relatives or neighbors need to present original City of Dubuque utility bills dated in November 2005 that have the Holiday Tag information printed on the bill. A renter in a housing unit where the owner pays the monthly solid waste fee will need to request a tag from the property manager.

Customers can pick up these "extra bag" green tags during normal business hours at the new Municipal Services Center at 925 Kerper Court, Utility Billing on the first floor of City Hall at 50 East 13th St., the Housing and Community Development Office at 1805 Central, and the Leisure Services Park and Recreation Office at 2200 Bunker Hill Road. (Phone requests will not be accepted.) The Holiday Tags may be used on any collection day in the future.

City Employee Profile: Environmental Sanitarian Tim Link

Environmental Sanitarian Tim Link has been a member of the City of Dubuque Health Services Department since 1995. His primary responsibilities include the inspection of food establishments, hotels and motels, and public swimming pools; authorizing permits for septic systems; conducting indoor air quality assessments; and responding to nuisance reports of garbage and weeds. Tim holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Loras College and is currently pursuing a master's degree in public health from the University of Iowa.



Tim's position recently allowed him to travel to Louisiana to assist in recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina. As a member of Dubuque's Health Services Department, he serves on regional and state committees and is a team member on the State of Iowa Environmental Health Emergency Response Team (EHRT). This state group of health department professionals was formed recently to be a resource in case a disaster overwhelmed the capacity of local health departments.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the EHRT was called upon to assist in Louisiana. Thirty team members from across the state left Iowa on September 3 and traveled to Baton Rouge. Tim was part of a six-member subgroup called the Iowa

Environmental Health Response Team, which assisted state and local public health officials in planning and performing the environmental public health response to Hurricane Katrina.



Tim spent the next 14 days in numerous communities including Livingston, Slidell,

Metairie, Macomb, Covington, and Mandeville. The majority of his time was spent visiting commercial food suppliers and restaurants to inspect the safety of the food they had on hand, their disposal of contaminated food, clean-up procedures, employee safety, and structural damage to their facilities. At one seafood supplier, Tim's team seized seven dump-truck loads of oysters that had to be disposed of due to lack of refrigeration because of the area's power outage. One parish in which he worked contained 7,000 restaurants and he visited up to 50 locations in a day, often providing information on appropriate clean-up processes to owners who were eager to reopen after power was restored.

His responsibilities took him through some hard-hit areas. One area in Slidell contained 40 restaurants before the hurricane but when Tim arrived to inspect the area, only one remained standing. He described the damage as "unimaginable" in areas where he saw block after block of houses in water that ranged from two-feet deep to eight feet.

"After a while, you just feel so bad for the people because of the magnitude of their loss," Tim said. "Everything they owned was in a trash heap in front of their house."

While the destruction was overwhelming, he was also affected by the response to the disaster. "I saw countless acts of kindness every day. I was amazed by how many people and organizations came to help."

Tim and the other members of the EHRT team returned to Iowa on September 18.



The Dubuque City Council meets on the first and third Monday of the month at the third-floor auditorium of the Carnegie-Stout Public Library, 360 West 11th St. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m.

Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

Nov 7 **City Council Meeting**
Nov 8 **General Election**
Nov 9-10 **“Medicare and You” Days** (see page 6)
Nov 11 **City Offices Closed for Veterans Day**
Nov 21 **City Council Meeting**
Nov 23 **Leaf Rake-Out Program Ends**
Nov 24 **Thanksgiving –**
 Refuse Collection Delayed until Nov 26
Nov 24-25 **City Offices Closed for Holiday**
Nov 26 **Yard Waste Collection Ends**

DECEMBER

Dec 5 **City Council Meeting**
Dec 19 **City Council Meeting**
Dec 23-26 **City Offices Closed for Holiday**

JANUARY

Jan 2 **Merry Mulch Christmas**
 Tree Collection Begins
Jan 13 **Merry Mulch Collection Ends**

Clip and Send Your Comments to the City Manager's Office, 50 West 13th Street, Dubuque, IA, 52001-4864

Name _____
City _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Comments:

Terry Duggan, Mayor
John Markham, 1st Ward
Roy Buol, 2nd Ward
Joyce Connors, 3rd Ward
Patricia Cline, 4th Ward
Dan Nicholson, At-large
Ann Michalski, At-large

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City Focus is a publication of the City of Dubuque. For up-to-date information on events and programs, visit our website: www.cityofdubuque.org

The City of Dubuque welcomes your comments and suggestions about your city government or anything appearing in this publication. Inquiries must include your name, address, and telephone number, or an email address so a response can be provided.

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