

Champlin Moves Forward on Mississippi Crossings Redevelopment Plans

The Mississippi Crossings redevelopment project involves properties located SE of the Anoka-Champlin bridge, and northeast of US Highway 169. The plan calls for transportation improvements, along with 450 new rooftops, 185,000 square feet of new commercial space, and expanded open space along the riverfront.

Transportation improvements planned include \$5.75 million in US Highway 169 improvements. Overall transportation improvements are estimated to cost \$10.4 million. The city is seeking state and federal funding for this work.

The lead project includes a two-story restaurant/event center, a village green with river dockage, a market rate apartment community, and a 304-stall parking garage with a 48,000 square foot commercial liner building.

The city plans to act as the project's master developer. In this role, the city will establish the overall development plan, prepare and market the development sites, and coordinate the overall development vision.

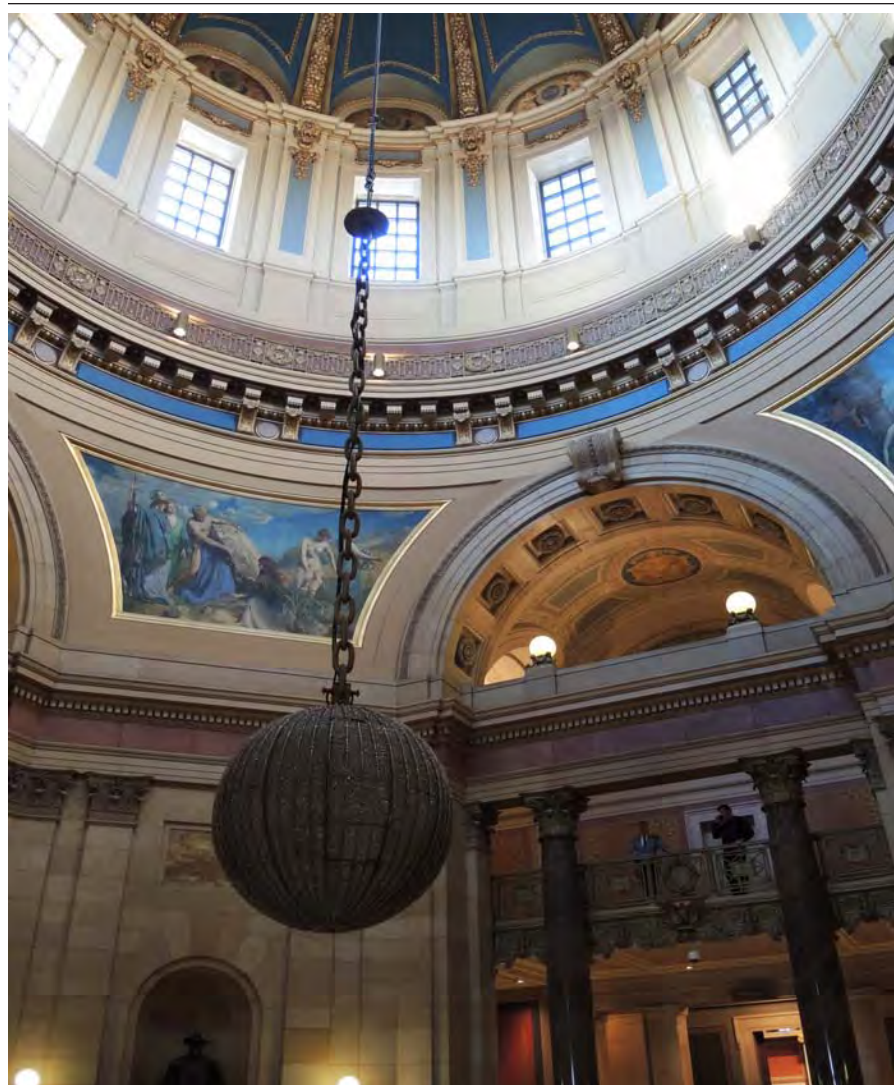
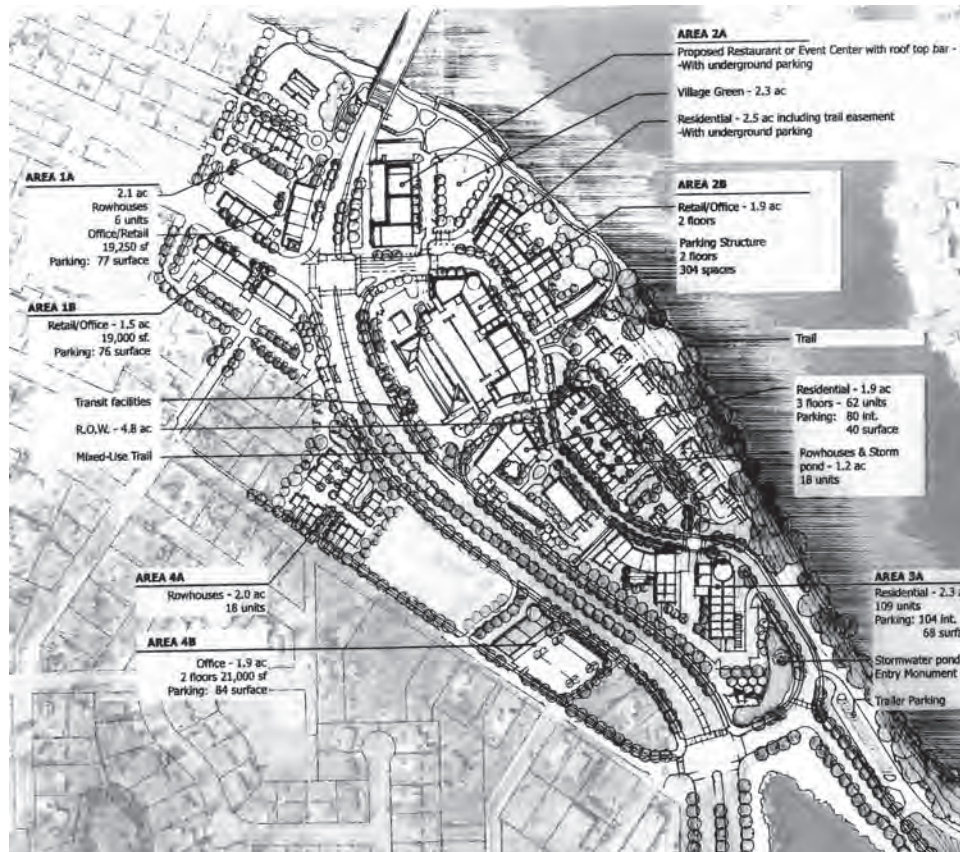
This project has not been without controversy. KARE 11 reported on February 23, 2005 in a story titled "Eminent Domain or Land Grab", that there was a battle shaping up between the city and residents. Some residents were offended at having their homes called blighted and refused to move.

Deputy City Administrator John Cox recognizes the past controversy and wants it to be known that while the city acquired key properties in the area, many of them were purchased during a soft real estate market at assessed market values. Eminent domain was not used in the acquisition of properties.

While the long term redevelopment plan envisions the removal of the Sinclair station on the west side of US Highway 169, Mr. Cox stated that at this point in time, site acquisition would be cost prohibitive and is not being pursued.

Infrastructure work is expected to begin in 2013, with building in 2014, but that the proposed market rate apartment building will not take shape until 2015 due to the two years required for the financing and construction.

The Mississippi Crossing redevelopment project began in 1999 with a 26-member citizen task force that was charged with recommending to the city ideas to rejuvenate the Mississippi riverfront and the old business district.



Capitol Chandelier Shines Once Again

On Thursday, January 17th at 4:00 p.m., the Capitol's chandelier was raised up to the top of the capitol rotunda, 142 feet above the glass star inlaid in the marble floor beneath it.

In August 2010, the chandelier was lowered and removed to protect it during a renovation project which included the replacement of windows in the Capitol dome. While the chandelier has been lowered a few times since its original installation in 1904, it is believed that this is the first time that it has actually been removed and transported out of the rotunda area.

The last time the chandelier was rewired and cleaned was in 1979. This time, the 40,000 crystal beads could not be cleaned individually and instead were rinsed with soap and water until 34 years worth of dust and grime were removed.

There were close to 1000 people assembled in the Capitol rotunda area to hear speeches from Brian Pease, site manager for the State Capitol historic site, and Spencer Cronk, Commissioner of the Department of Administration. During the singing of "Hail! Minnesota" the chandelier was raised into place. And when it was illuminated there was a roar of applause from those in attendance.

The next time the chandelier will be lit is on May 11, 2013, Statehood Day.

(See photos and facts on page 2)

MINNESOTA STATE CAPITOL Chandelier Raising and Lighting Ceremony

Thursday, January 17, 2013
4:00 p.m.

Vocal Selection	Erik Pearson, Soloist Diane Pearson, accompanist
Welcome	Brian Pease, Site Manager, Minnesota Historical Society State Capitol Historic Site
Speaker	Spencer Cronk, Commissioner, State of Minnesota Department of Administration
Chandelier History and Interesting Facts	
Chandelier Raising	
Vocal Selection - "Hail! Minnesota"	Erik Pearson, Soloist
Chandelier Lighting	
Concluding Remarks	
Vocal Selection -	Erik Pearson, Soloist

(See back for "Hail! Minnesota" lyrics)



Gov's budget raises taxes, increases spending

The budget proposal Gov. Mark Dayton issued this week is all about unnecessary spending to feed government growth and raising our taxes to pay for it.

We do not need to raise taxes to make ends meet if we spend responsibly. Revenue is continuing to rise even without tax increases due to the improvements Republicans made in 2011-12. Minnesota's unemployment rate is 5.5% and shrinking. The budget Republicans enacted last biennium has produced a combined \$2.5 billion in surplus revenue over the last three economic forecasts.

Indications are that trend is continuing and we anticipate 2 to 5% more state revenue in the next biennium even without tax increases. The responsible thing to do is to keep government spending to within that level.

Instead, the governor is pushing additional spending and wants to raise our taxes to pay for it. If the governor gets his way, we'll soon be paying more for everything from a brake job to a haircut, a \$100 coat, or to make an online purchase. Ever smoke? The governor's proposal would jack up the cost of cigarettes by 94 cents per pack.

It all adds up to \$3.7 billion more in taxes and \$2.5 billion more in government spending.

The new top tax rate would rise two full percentage points, to 9.85%. State revenue officials indicate these new taxes would cost Minnesota's business owners more than \$1.5 billion. Wisconsin's governor already has responded, indicating he would do more to encourage Minnesota businesses to relocate across the border.

The surplus revenue we have generated allowed us to not only fully repay the K-12 funding shift enacted as part of the 2011 budget compromise by Republicans, but to also pay off half the school shift enacted under previous Democrat majorities.

For as much as Democrats used repaying the K-12 shift as a chanting point against Republicans during the campaign, Dayton's plan would not get around to paying that off until 2017. It's interesting how the governor preaches that K-12 funding shifts are gimmicks and then includes one in his own budget proposal. I believe the surplus money being generated by Republican budgeting should be used to pay down the balance far sooner.

The governor made his budget plan public Tuesday. This was just days after most Minnesota workers received a 2-percent reduction in pay when the feds allowed our payroll taxes to rise. Additional tax increases that hit the middle class will be tough for folks to swallow.

In fact, the governor's own fellow Democrats have spoken out against proposals like his. One Democrat in the House was quoted in their local paper saying, "We better not tax items that I would purchase."

The governor also says he wants to give all Minnesota property taxpayers a rebate through these tax increases. That means middle class-families and even our state's poorest citizens will be paying more for everyday items so that even Minnesota's richest homeowners can get a government check.

Dayton cannot pass his own budget bill, but this blueprint does show how he wants Democrats in the House and Senate to shape a budget this year: Spend more. Tax more.

I will continue reminding them why heading down this path is not only is unnecessary, but would be bad policy and a regrettable mistake.

Gov's Budget Plan Will Make Everyone Pay More

The big news of the week was the release of Governor Dayton's budget proposal. I released a statement, sent out an email, and submitted a letter to the papers on exactly why his budget proposal is so bad, so I won't go into too many of the details here. But the first question I always ask myself when reading legislation is this: will this improve the lives of Minnesotans? The answer here is "no." Let me be clear: ALL Minnesotans will end up paying more under the governor's plan. This is not a budget that will get the rich to pay their "fair share"; rather, it's a budget that is harmful to every Minnesotan and our economic recovery.

Two years ago, Republicans inherited staggering deficits from previous Democrat majorities. In two years we turned those deficits into surpluses. We gave the Democrats a great blueprint for success. I hope we can work together as colleagues for the betterment of our state.

For example, we focused on trimming waste from every budget area. We worked on dozens and dozens of reforms that would save us money. Some of them passed, some of them were vetoed. But our reforms and spending cuts were the foundation for our dramatic turnaround.

Now we're going back to the politics of old. More spending, more taxes. Is this responsible government? You'll feel it more in your daily life, as a host of new goods and services are going to be taxed:

- Digital products/online purchases
- Over-the-counter drugs
- Auto repairs
- Veterinary services
- Clothing
- Memberships (i.e., Lifetime Fitness)
- Barber shops, beauty shops, tattoo artists
- Personal services (i.e., wedding planners, dating services)



Rep. Tom Hackbarth
District 31B
309 State Office Bldg.
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul MN 55155
651-296-2439



Senator Roger Chamberlain
District 38
129 State Office Bldg.
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul MN 55155
651-296-1253

This is far from a comprehensive list, but should provide you with an idea of how the governor's plan will impact you. Negotiations will take place over the coming weeks, but I am going to work to amend this bill to make it as taxpayer friendly as I can.

On the local front, we made progress this week on three key issues:

1. We are getting close to a solution to the White Bear Lake water level problem. A number of us have been working on draft legislation, and we finally filed a bill this week. The next step is to get a hearing for it.
2. I've also been working on a bill that would grant our quad cities authority to do a feasibility study on water and sewer issues they have been dealing with. This should get introduced soon.
3. I dropped a bill addressing the White Bear Lake Firefighters' pension program. They had a problem related to survivor's benefits that my bill will solve.

As always, please feel free to contact me any time with your comments or concerns.

ROSEVILLE LIVING SMARTER HOME & GARDEN FAIR
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2013
9 AM - 3 PM • FREE EVENT
FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY CENTER • 1910 COUNTY ROAD B

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- INFORMATIVE WORKSHOPS

LIVING SMARTER www.LivingSMARTER.org/fair
651-792-7078

Low The Photo Guy
Low Michaels
I Cover All the Angles
Office
651-489-8006
low@louthephotoguy.com
www.louthephotoguy.com
Contact us to discuss or arrange photography for your event

Crystal Chandelier Fun Facts

Size: 6 feet in diameter, 19'-4" in circumference

Weight: Approximately one ton (2,000 lbs.), including the 28 feet of chain weighing an estimated 500 lbs.

The approximately 40,000 crystal beads are strung on what appears to be solid nickel wire. The chandelier frame is likely nickel-plated brass.

Each bead is made of leaded glass (commonly called "crystal"), and were handmade and hand-ground (faceted).

Light bulbs: The ninety-two 75-watt incandescent bulbs will be replaced with 67-watt incandescent clear traffic bulbs. Three doors, which have been removed for cleaning, provide access to the bulbs inside.

Originally raised and lowered on a manual winch, the chandelier is attached to an electric hoist located above the rotunda ceiling. It takes approximately five minutes to lower. Historical records note that the fixture has been lowered five times: 1910, 1936, 1951, 1979, and again in June 2010 to test the hoist and examine the condition of the chandelier. It was lowered most recently on August 10.



Editor's note: See full color photos in online edition at www.AnokaCountyRecord.com

Property tax — maligned and misunderstood

Article by Mark Haveman

Tax reform is in the air in Minnesota. And the tax everyone loves to hate -- the local property tax -- is again a prime target.

Officials in Gov. Mark Dayton's administration have heard loud and clear that Minnesotans want lower property taxes. It's an idea that the new Legislature seems eager to support.

Although the specifics of Gov. Dayton's tax reform proposal remain a mystery, all indications are that reducing local reliance on property taxation and providing property tax relief will be high priorities. But are these reform goals really justified?

A closer look at the main arguments offered in their favor suggests that concerns about property taxation are significantly overstated.

Argument 1: Minnesota's revenue system is unbalanced and too dependent on property taxes.

In 2010, the property tax's share of the "big three" state-local revenue sources (income tax, sales tax and property tax) was the highest it had been in more than a decade -- 39.8 percent. The resulting tax system has been compared by critics to an off-kilter three-legged stool that can no longer stand up.

But a rise in the property tax's share of revenue is exactly what you should expect at the end of a major recession. Since volatile income and sales tax revenues fell by \$1.35 billion between 2008 and 2010, the inherently more stable property tax was predestined to pick up tax share.

Minnesota Management and Budget projects that if we do absolutely nothing, the property tax share of big-three revenues will decline to 36.4 percent next year -- a level that was the norm throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

For perspective, consider that in 1973, after major tax reform to buy down local property taxes (the much-touted "Minnesota Miracle"), property taxes raised 46.9 percent of the "big three" taxes. Our three-legged stool was a unicycle.

Rather than throwing the system out of balance, property taxes by their very nature provide the fiscal system with sorely needed stability exactly when it's needed most. The property tax should not be criticized for the very characteristic that causes public-finance experts to find it indispensable.

Argument 2: The property tax is highly regressive.

A regressive tax is one that burdens the less-affluent more than the more-affluent. But according to the Department of Revenue, Minnesota's property tax on homes is actually one of the least regressive taxes in the state. It's less regressive than the sales tax, which is the most commonly sought substitute revenue for local governments. When combined with the state's property tax refund program, homeowner property taxes are less regressive than -- among others -- corporate income taxes, gambling taxes, gas taxes or tobacco taxes.

Argument 3: The property tax is poorly aligned with taxpayers' "ability to pay."

Not really -- not according to a Revenue Department report that matches homeowners' incomes to their actual property tax bills. This report finds that homeowners' property tax bills are quite affordable across most of the state, both in total dollars and relative to incomes. They are most affordable in Greater Minnesota, where complaints about property tax burdens are especially strong.

Some affordability problems will always exist, which is why it's vital to also recognize Minnesota's generous, broadly accessible property tax-refund programs. Over the last two years, the state spent \$627 million to deliver direct, income-tested property tax relief to homeowners whose tax relative

to their incomes exceeded statewide standards. Renters received an additional \$388 million based on an estimate of the property taxes they paid as part of their rent. Importantly, these refund programs are more than three times as progressive -- favoring the less-well-off -- as Minnesota's income tax.

National rankings also undercut concerns about Minnesota's dependence on property taxes. Property taxes relative to home value here are in the middle of the pack nationally. Minnesota's property tax collections, in total, are below the national average regardless of whether you measure them against population or income.

Bad reform habits die hard

Despite being unpopular, the property tax is regarded by experts as the best way for local governments to raise money. It provides a stable stream of revenue that ensures funding for local services. It can't be evaded. It's simple to pay -- no accountants needed. Countless studies have shown that high-quality property-tax-funded services lead to higher property values-- you economically benefit from what you pay for. And the visibility of the property tax allows and encourages taxpayers to compare the benefits and costs of local services they receive.

In this sense, the perceived "problem" of property tax increases actually represents a crucial accountability link between citizens and their governments.

Yet, none of these arguments can diminish citizen frustration with a tax that is often unpredictable, frequently paid in big semiannual chunks and very difficult to understand. Possession may be nine-tenths of the law, but perception and politics is 99.9 percent of property tax policy.

If reform only addresses the perception and politics problems by pacifying local governments and taxpayers with levy buy-downs -- that is, sending more state aid to local governments so they can reduce or hold down property taxes -- we won't accomplish anything. Forty years of experience demonstrates the futility of this approach and what we can expect in the future if we try it again.

Growing pressure from resource-hungry state programs will make it difficult to sustain the new levels of aid to local governments, let alone continuously provide even more money. Meanwhile, local governments, based on expectations of continuing or even rising state support, will create service levels, amenities and cost structures that are increasingly unaffordable without it. As state aids become precarious, property tax levies will start rising again, and the temporary property tax relief will evaporate. Calls for aid reform will begin again as communities argue that their "neediness" is not being adequately recognized in the existing distribution formulas.

Local officials will then cut services, because they do not have the political support to continue raising the necessary property taxes to pay for them. Ironically, the evidence often shows that the additional property taxes needed would still be affordable by any objective measure. But local taxpayers for decades have been taught to expect local services at a discount price.

So the call for higher state taxes to fund local property tax relief will begin anew.

We've seen this movie many times. But this time the ending will be different. Once we had excess capacity in our tax system and tax rates to perpetuate this cycle of fiscal illusion. Current budget and demographic trends say that those days are over.

Real reform basics

This type of "reform" does nothing to improve the incentives and disincentives surrounding property taxation. Real property tax reform should focus instead on respecting the essential role the tax has, and will continue to have, in local government finance.

Foremost, we must untangle the complex and messy financial relationships between the state and local governments.

Currently, the state subsidizes cost structures created by local governments at the same time that local property taxes are required to pay for state mandates and programs over which local officials have no control.

One of the smartest things we could do is sort out these lines of accountability based on this general principle: If you have no say on what gets done or how it gets done, you shouldn't be paying for it. This is especially relevant to improving the design of state aids to cities and counties.

Simplifying the property tax system and improving its transparency are two more worthy reform objectives. Local government finance has a lot of moving parts -- any of which can affect an individual's property tax. To restore trust in the tax, we must make it simpler to understand. And we must make it much easier for taxpayers to accurately determine what and who is causing their taxes to rise.

Real reform, leading to a stronger and more accountable revenue system, is unlikely to pay big political dividends. But it will preserve what is most important about the property tax -- its ability to balance citizens' expectations of government with their willingness to pay for it.

Mark Haveman is executive director of the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence, formerly known as the Minnesota Taxpayers Association.

CON ARTISTS NEVER GIVE UP

by Bryan Olson

The Anoka County Record recently received this account of a scam that law enforcement officials have been notified of:

A woman received a voice mail message from a heavily accented male who stated he worked for the "State Bureau of Investigations". The suspect then states a legal case has been filed against her -- he used her full name and Social Security number -- and left a call back number of 901-5xx-1xxx. The phone number was listed in the state of Tennessee and appeared to then run back through a switchboard system forwarding to India. The victim called the number back and was she told that the investigation could be but on "hold" if she was willing to pay \$900.00. When the victim said no, the male implied that it could be stopped for \$500.00. She refused to pay and ended the conversation.

Since that time, she has received numerous voice mail messages from 3 different males about this issue. Two males identify themselves with real names stating they are from the State Bureau of Investigations. The 3rd male identifies himself by using a name, but no title and says he works with the local police department. All 3 males demand payment to stop the unidentified investigation.

A scam closer to home was reported in the Ramsey city employee newsletter:

An 80-year old Ramsey resident reported that he was contacted by a Mexico City police officer and was told his grandson had been arrested. He was told that the bond for release was \$990 and that he needed to wire the money. A male was then put on the phone that he believed was his grandson. He stated he needed his help and asked that his mom and dad not be told. The complainant wired the money. When he returned home, he was contacted by phone and told another \$990 was needed to cover attorney fees. He attempted to send the money but the transaction would not go through. The complainant made contact with his grandson by phone and learned that he had been in Iowa and was fine. The complainant was advised that there was no way to get the money back.

The "I need help -- please wire me money" scam is frequently played, and others to watch out for include fake invoices for websites and domain names, and magazine subscriptions.

Know who you are sending money to.

Scam artists collect the names and addresses of magazine subscribers and website names and have sent invoices that appear to be legitimate but prey upon people who may have forgotten that they had already paid the invoice. Any businesses or persons who have a website managed by someone other than themselves should check with their webmasters first before paying any invoices.

St. Francis school board creating spectacle

by Brian Williams

Maybe cigarettes served a purpose we didn't all understand. An op-ed writer opined this once, wondering if cigarettes as a sedative helped keep us more relaxed than we seem to be today. People have trouble overlooking the slightest oversights or flaws in human nature.

So we have that minister in Rochester shooting and injuring his granddaughter who he thought might be a burglar outside the house. He's charged with a felony. Police are busy not with basic issues of the public staying safe and property being secure, but with giving citations on matters where no immediate dangers can be perceived.

All this is a prelude to the main topic I'm addressing in this post: the St. Francis school board. I have no connection to that Minnesota community. I have written about that board once previously. I could have sworn that would be the only time.

But oddly, that school board is in the news again on the same matter that brought it notoriety not that long ago. Maybe if this board met in a smoke-filled room, they'd all get along a little better. Remember how the World War II generation smoked? And drank? They were also very good at keeping matters in their proper perspective. Having dealt with the Depression and WWII, they knew what real problems were.

Today we have kids suspended from school for playing "cops and robbers" in which they merely point fingers as simulated "guns." Such playing has been common from time immemorial.

Maybe it would be good for all of us to have a super-duper depression again.

The St. Francis school board burst into the news initially by ousting a member. This wasn't a recall election, it was an ouster. An election I would respect.

Board members there have the obligation or "chore" of submitting columns for a newsletter. Board member Matt Rustad got the heave-ho for lifting some paragraphs from a blog, or I guess it was a "comment on a blog," and he had fingers pointed at him for the "p" word: "plagiarism."

Oh, and it seems he wasn't totally forthcoming about this act when confronted with the accusation.

There are certain questions I wouldn't care to be forthcoming about. "Have you ever taken a pee along the side of a road?"

I hope some legal wheels are still turning on behalf of Mr. Rustad, and that this isn't a completely settled matter now. David Lindberg, the St. Francis district's human resources director, makes the pronouncement about why exactly Rustad had to be excised. Lindberg proclaims that the accused party "lied" about his actions.

Don't we all lie when we want to deny a minor infraction? A politico on TV asserted during the campaign that a politician is in fact justified in lying "if the question is unfair."

Rustad was not lifting paragraphs from a commercially published book. He saw some interesting material on a website, material he wanted to share, and apparently lifted some sentences for his newsletter submission. The Internet is all about sharing. Wikipedia entries are prepared by people not motivated by wanting to make money from such entries — how would they make money? — but by people with a passion for wanting to share information.

There needn't be an economic motive for wanting to share information. Young people understand this as they constantly broaden their grasp of new media. Older people have gotten over some of their mistrust of the new media. But only some.

It's also older people that are keeping newspapers alive for the time being. Media analyst Allan Mutter wrote recently that based on data, a trend just since 2010 has seen the average newspaper reader become markedly older. Sorry newspaper guys, we're just reciting facts.

It's a cliché that "information wants to be free." It's a cliché based entirely on truth.

The "overhead" once required in sharing information, i.e. a printing press, is out the window. Sometimes I have to pinch myself to see if I'm dreaming.

I'm a former newspaper writer who has found new life online. I could hardly have predicted it. What started as a blog that I felt might just have a handful of personal friend visitors, has developed into something more. I don't make money but I don't spend any either. Such a media universe could never have been foreseen when I was a kid.

Writing was a rather narrow specialty when I was a kid. Today it's ubiquitous. Information flows all over. And while a writer would never want to steal a section of "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and present it as his own, one can "share" from the endless sea of impulsive thoughts, commenting and reporting out there, and not have a Federal case made of it.

A majority of the St. Francis school board is stuck in the old days. Or, more likely, a majority is uncomfortable with this Mr. Rustad for other reasons, and is using a trumped-up charge.

Was Mr. Rustad not an elected public official? Yes or no? If he's not, if in fact he's a "school district employee," I'll eat my hat.

We want schools to be overseen by elected officials because we want the proper checks and balances. Elected officials will look after the interests of the public

and their collective pocketbook. Boards have enough trouble as it is. Look at the University of Minnesota and its board of regents that can't seem to keep an eye on things.

What's with the chutzpah of the St. Francis "human resources director" making such a vicious pronouncement — "lying" — about a young man who simply wanted to serve on a small community school board for what can be presumed to be the right reasons?

This whole kerfuffle has now taken on a new wrinkle. On page 5B of the January 17 Star Tribune, via a big headline, we learn - gasp! - that a second member of this notorious school board has now been accused of plagiarizing. This individual is the board's new chairwoman, Amy Kelly.

Holy copy and paste! What's going on here?

Kelly was fulfilling her obligations for that school district newsletter, the Courier, which I would suggest is now more trouble than it's worth. This was a column in August, 2011, which presented the story of a boy who threw a starfish into the ocean. A plagiarism-checking Internet site was used to identify this alleged ethical faux pas by Amy Kelly. It was found that Kelly's column was "67 per cent plagiarized."

Kelly is going to have to explain herself at a January 28 school board meeting. Does this board realize it's becoming kind of a laughingstock?

Kelly so far has offered a very lame defense of her actions. She asserts that she "assumes" other people had heard this story numerous times previously, i.e. that it was in popular circulation. I'm offended by that. I have a B.A. degree and consider myself to be pretty well-read and worldly, and I cannot recall ever hearing this story. If I have, I've forgotten it.

So it would have been nice for Kelly to attribute to a source. In this case the source is a book entitled "The Unexpected Universe," from 1969. So it's not like it's old folklore from The Brothers Grimm or anything like that.

The author who got ripped off here is Loren Eiseley.

Kelly could have taken the trouble to give the proper background. She had actually been critical of Rustad.

Rustad does have his defenders such as board member Marsha Van Denburgh who felt Rustad wasn't treated fairly. Another sympathetic party is Suzanne Erkel who simply felt the Rustad issue was "overblown."

The perceptive Van Denburgh isn't calling for Kelly's removal or resignation but she sees a problem with precedent, which is something that elected officials must be attuned to.

Again, are school board members elected public officials? A synonym for that is "politicians." Aren't politicians accused of "lying" all the time? Heaven help us if politicians could be removed from office simply because of a "lie."

Didn't Michele Bachmann campaign for re-election by asserting with no subtlety that her opponent, Jim Graves, had "lied" about his involvement with the United Way? If he in fact did, would he be ineligible to take office as congressman? I mean, after all, the St. Francis school board has made a determination like this.

Let the voters decide. Unless you find that to be inconvenient, St. Francis school board members.

The topic on which Rustad was sharing was "paperless schools." Maybe this represents too much of a change in our education system for many board members to comprehend or enact right now. So maybe they feel uncomfortable.

I am absolutely cheering for the continued retreat of the "paper" media. Change can be unsettling. Maybe we could all handle it a little better by just "lighting up a smoke."

Brian Williams is a former newspaper reporter for the Morris Sun Tribune in Morris, Minnesota and is not to be confused with the NBC newsmen of the same name. He wrote this editorial for his blog, <http://ilovemorris73.blogspot.com/>. Published with permission.

Editor's Note: The St. Francis ISD #15 school board meeting January 28th featured a vote to reinstate Matthew Rustad to the school board. The vote was 4-2 against the motion, with Marsha Van Denburgh and Suzanne Erkel voting for it.

Board member Erkel said she knew there were not the votes on the school board to push the plagiarism charge against Kelly. She imparted some feedback she had received from residents who had asked her what the difference is between Kelly's infraction and Rustad's, and why was Rustad voted off the school board while Kelly is not going to face the same kind of trial?

The motion to reinstate Rustad was inspired by these questions.

Van Denburgh, who was the school board's chair last year, reiterated some of her previous comments regarding the legal issues and possible ramifications of the board's actions against Rustad. She said she is of the opinion that it's wrong, and a bad law, that permits a school board member, an elected official, to be removed by a vote of the body.

A public meeting where the St. Francis ISD #15 school board will interview seven applicants for Rustad's seat will take place February 20th at 7 p.m. in the school district's offices — its usual location for school board meetings.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS CALENDAR

ANOKA COUNTY
Anoka County Govt. Center
2100 3rd Ave.
Anoka MN 55303-5024
Ph.: 763-323-5700
www.co.anoka.mn.us

Mon. Feb. 4
Public Works Cmte, 9 am,
Rm 772, ACGC
Tues. Feb. 5
Parks & Rec. Cmte, 9 am,
Chomonix Golf Course
Clubhouse
Tues. Feb. 12
Management Committee, 8:30 am,
East Bethel City Hall
County Board, 9:30 am,
East Bethel City Hall, 2241
221st Ave NE, East Bethel

Wed. Feb. 13
Waste Management & Energy
Cmte, 8:15 am, Rm 772, ACGC
Fri. Feb. 15
Public Works Cmte, 9 am,
Rm 772, ACGC

Tues. Feb. 19
Human Services Cmte, 8:30 am,
Rm 710, ACGC
Information Technology Cmte,
10:30 am, Rm 772, ACGC

FRIDLEY
Fridley City Hall
6431 University Ave NE
Fridley, MN 55432
Ph: 763-571-3450
www.ci.fridley.mn.us

Mon. Feb. 4
Charter Comm., 7 pm
Parks & Rec. Comm., 7 pm

Thurs. Feb. 7
HRA, 7 pm
Mon. Feb. 11 & 25
City Council, 7 pm
Wed. Feb. 20
Planning Comm., 7 pm

HAM LAKE
Ham Lake City Hall
15544 Central Ave NE
Ham Lake, MN 55304
Ph: 763-434-9555
www.ci.ham-lake.mn.us
Hours: M-Th 7 AM - 4:30 PM
Fri: 7 AM-12 NOON

Mon. Feb. 4
City Council, 6 pm
Mon. Feb. 11
Planning Comm., 6 pm
Tues. Feb. 19
City Council, 6 pm
Wed. Feb. 20
Park & Tree Comm., 6 pm
Mon. Feb. 25
Planning Comm., 6 pm

LINWOOD TWP
Linwood Town Hall
22817 Typo Creek Dr. NE
Linwood, MN 55079
Ph: 651-462-2812
linwoodtownship.org

Tues. Feb. 5
Road & Bridge Cmte., 7 pm
Tues. Feb. 12 & 26
Town Board, 6 pm
Tues. Feb. 19
Planning Comm., 7 pm
Mon. Feb. 25
Park & Rec. Comm., 7 pm

OAK GROVE
Oak Grove City Hall
19900 Nightingale St. NW
Oak Grove, MN 55011
Ph: 763-404-7000
www.ci.oak-grove.mn.us

2nd and last Monday of month
City Council, 7 pm (EDA
follows council mtg on last
Monday)
3rd Wednesday
Parks Comm., 7 pm
3rd Thursday
Planning Comm., 7 pm

RAMSEY
Ramsey Municipal Center
7550 Sunwood Dr. NW
Ramsey, MN 55303
Ph: 763-427-1410
www.ci.ramsey.mn.us

Thurs. Jan. 31
Planning Comm. Special Mtg.,
7 pm
Mon. Feb. 4
EPB — 6:30 pm
Tues. Feb. 5
North Metro Chamber of Com-
merce Business Excellence
Award Luncheon, 11:30 am,
Majestic Oaks, 701 Bunker Lk
Blvd, Ham Lake
City Council Special Mtg., 5:30 pm,
followed by joint meeting with
Park & Rec. Comm.
Tues. Feb. 12
Anoka Area Chamber of Comm.
State of the Cities luncheon,
11 am, Harvest Grill, Bunker
Hills Golf Club, 12800 Bunker

Prairie Rd NW
City Council “work session”,
5:30 pm, council meeting 7 pm,
followed by HRA
Thurs. Feb. 14
EDA, 7:30 am
Park & Rec. Comm., 6:30 pm

**ANOKA CONSERVATION
DISTRICT**
1318 McKay Dr NE #300
Ham Lake, MN 55304
Ph.: (763) 434-2030
anokaswcd.org

Tues. Feb. 19
Board of Supervisors, 5 pm

CENTENNIAL ISD #12
4707 North Rd
Circle Pines, MN 55014
Ph.: (763) 792-6000
isd12.org

Mon. Feb. 11
School Board, 6:30 pm

FRIDLEY ISD #14
6000 W Moore Lake Dr
Fridley, MN 55432
Ph.: (763) 502-5000
fridley.k12.mn.us

Tues. Feb. 19
School Bd “work session,”
5:30 pm, Public Comment
7 pm, Business Mtg 7:30 pm,
Fridley City Hall

**SPRING LAKE PARK
ISD #16**
1415 81st Ave NE
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432
Ph.: (763) 786-5570
springlakeparkschools.org

Tues. Feb. 12
School Board “work session,”
6 pm
Tues. Feb. 26
School Board, 7 pm

**QCTV
Cable Commission**
Ramsey, Andover, Champlin, Anoka
Thurs. Feb. 21, 5 pm, Anoka
City Hall

**North Metro TV
Cable Commission**
Ham Lake, Blaine, Spring Lake Park, Lino
Lakes, Lexington, Centerville, Circle Pines
Tues. Feb. 5, 10:30 am,
Operations Cmte., NMCTV,
12520 Polk St. NE, Blaine
Wed. Feb. 6, 6 pm, Executive
Cmte., NMCTV, 12520 Polk
St. NE, Blaine
Wed. Feb. 20, 6 pm, Cable
Commission meeting, Spring
Lake Park City Hall, 1301 81st
Ave NE, SLP

**Meetings listed on this page are
subject to change — call ahead to verify**

Electronic Pollbooks, Early Voting among proposals for Minnesota election reform *by Bryan Olson*

The House Elections Committee met on January 22 and its chair, Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) said that he expected his committee would over time focus on two top election issues: campaign finance disclosure reforms and the use of electronic pollbooks for elections.

Electronic pollbooks, seen by Democrats as a compromise answer to conservatives' proposals that would require a photo ID to vote, will no doubt be a complex argument.

Simon suggested that perhaps an informal sub-group within the committee could examine the various ways electronic pollbooks could be used and the technical issues that such uses may reveal. He cited that the devices sometimes have been used only for same day registration, and have also been used to provide a photo to match up to a voter at the polling place. The pollbooks would have voters' photos pre-loaded, taken from drivers' licenses and state identification cards. The devices would also have the ability to take photos of new voters and enter them into the database.

Essentially the new pollbooks would be an electronic version of the paper pollbooks voters have signed for decades, with the possible photo component added, and the ability to update information on-the-spot — which would find its way into the Secretary of State's voter database.

Simon said he sees electronic pollbooks as a potential area of common ground for bi-partisan support.

The devices could be used to enter new voter data on election day. Dan McGrath, president of Minnesota Majority, testified that Hennepin County has still not finalized its same day registration information from last November's election. The county enters the data by hand which takes weeks to accomplish after the election.

McGrath said his organization has been researching the integrity of Minnesota elections for the past five years. The 2008 Minnesota election had the highest number of voter fraud convictions in any single state election since 1936. McGrath said there were 200 convictions, but

also, “we have conclusive proof that over 1,000 people voted fraudulently in the 2008 election.”

McGrath praised the use of optical scanners and a paper ballot in the polling places, but damned “the combination of election day registration and vouching, where an unscrupulous voter can create an identity from whole cloth, make up a name on the spot, give an address and be given a ballot.”

McGrath went on, “after the fact, postcards are mailed out to the addresses of the newly registered voters. After the 2008 election, there were 6,000 same day registrants flagged as ‘challenged’ because their postcards came back as undeliverable mail.”

McGrath said he investigated some of the addresses that were on the undeliverable postcards. “I found warehouses, swamps, forests, sections of freeways, parks and areas where there wasn't a house for miles.”

He complained “there is no real serious effort to detect or prosecute voter fraud. It's taken outside citizens' groups to twist the arms of county attorneys to get them to investigate and prosecute.”

McGrath also made note of an incident in Crow Wing County during the 2010 election, where mentally-incapacitated people under guardianship and did not have the right to vote, were brought to the polling places by their caregivers and it was they who filled out their ballots while their charges were wandering away from the voting booth, inattentive.

Referring to the Voter ID constitutional amendment that failed in the 2012 election, McGrath said that he frequently heard opponents to the amendment say, “send it back”, implying that the legislature should pass a bill that “improves the integrity of our election system, rather than something that loosens up the system even more.”

McGrath testified that he doesn't believe electronic pollbooks are “the gold standard” for election integrity but endorses them as “a step in the right direction” and believes that the devices would be a benefit in the areas of database efficiency, speed and accuracy. They would also save personnel costs as data would not have to be hand-entered after an election. He and Simon made

note during the 55-minute meeting that the city of Minnetonka has had a positive experience using electronic pollbooks.

Other groups invited to speak at the meeting included Common Cause, represented by Jerry Franck, and the Minnesota League of Women Voters, represented by Laura Fredrick Wang, Executive Director, and Sherri Knuth, Public Policy Manager.

Both groups endorse early voting and absentee voting without an excuse.

Common Cause has focused a lot of its attention on the conservative lobbying group and think tank ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council). Franck cited the video documentary hosted by Bill Moyers, “The United States of ALEC” as one of its recent accomplishments. Franck said that Common Cause would like to see more financial disclosure required of such groups and identification of their contributors.

Common Cause would also like to see the Political Contribution Refund program (PCR) restored, a matching-fund public subsidy program for legislative candidates that has been pared back occasionally in recent years whenever state budgets became lean. Common Cause also asks that legislators' schedules be more transparent.

The Minnesota League of Women Voters endorses online voter registration since “many people conduct their day to day business online,” said Wang. The Mn-LWV sees early voting as a means to reduce the number of same day registrations and congestion in polling places on election day. The organization also calls for increased funding for the operations of the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board.

Deanna Strauss spoke on behalf of the Minnesota Voters Alliance. The organization has filed a lawsuit against the Secretary of State for lacking to verify the eligibility of voters, particularly those who register at the polling place on election day. The MVA contends that Article VII, Section I of the Minnesota Constitution defines two types of persons — those that are eligible to vote

ELECTION REFORM *continued on page 6*

CITY OF HAM LAKE
ORDINANCE NO. 13-02

An Ordinance relating to amending the license requirement for construction activities. Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Ham Lake, Anoka County, Minnesota, as follows: Article 7-210 of the Ham Lake City Code is hereby repealed, to be replaced by the following Article 7-210: 7-210 License Required Before any person, firm, corporation or other entity shall engage in the business of doing or performing any of the various types of work listed in this Article, they shall obtain a license...

/s/Michael G. Van Kirk, Mayor Doris Nivala, Administrator (Published Jan. 31, 2013 Anoka County Record)

CITY OF OAK GROVE
COUNTY OF ANOKA
STATE OF MINNESOTA

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Oak Grove Planning Commission's Regular Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 21, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. to hear the following public hearings in the order that they appear: PUBLIC HEARING to consider an amendment to a variance granted to Jim and Holly Renn, on July 9, 2012, which allowed for a height expansion during the replacement of a legally non-conforming structure...

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
CITY OF OAK GROVE
COUNTY OF ANOKA
STATE OF MINNESOTA

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Oak Grove City Council, at their Regular Meeting of February 11, 2013, will be conducting a Public Hearing at or around 7:00 p.m. in the Oak Grove Council Chambers, 19900 Nightingale St NW, Cedar, MN 55011 to consider Ordinance 13-02 which is an ordinance amending certain sections of the franchise agreement with Comcast of Minnesota, Inc. to construct, operate, and maintain a cable television system in the City setting forth conditions accompanying the grant of the franchise...

FREE INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

For taxpayers with low and moderate income, persons with disabilities, with special attention to those 60 years and older.

E-filed tax preparations will be done between February 1 and April 17, 2013 at the following Anoka County locations:

- Anoka Senior Center, 1500 South 6th St, Anoka — Wed. (1 pm-4pm), Thurs, (9 am-Noon)
Anoka Historical Society, 2135 3rd Ave N, Anoka Sat., (10:30 a.m. - 2 pm)
Anoka County Library, Northtown Branch, Blaine Sun, (1:30 pm-4:15 pm) **

**You can also complete your own Fed & State returns (Free) by using FAST (Fast Assisted Self-Serve Taxes) during these hours.

- Blaine Human Services Building, 1201 89th Ave NE, Blaine — Tues & Thurs, (1-4 pm)
Blaine — Mary Ann Young Senior Center, 9150 Central Ave NE, Blaine — Mon, (9 am-1 pm)*
*(appointment only, Call 763-786-9375)

- Columbia Heights Senior Center, 510 Mill St, Col Hgts, — Tues & Thurs, (9 am - Noon)
Coon Rapids, Epiphany Church-School, 1913 111th Ave NW, Coon Rapids — Sat. only, (9am-Noon)
Coon Rapids Senior Center, 11155 Robinson Dr NW, Coon Rapids — Tues. & Wed., (8:30 am-Noon)
Fridley Senior Center, 6085 7th St NE, Fridley — Wed., (9 am-Noon, & 1 pm-4 pm)
Fridley Unitarian Church, 6565 Oakley Dr NE, Fridley- Mon, (5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.)
Ham Lake Senior Center, 15544 Central Ave, Ham Lake — Tues, (8:30 am-Noon)

Please bring a copy of your 2010 tax return and all 2011 tax information; such as any W-2s from employment, 1099s for pensions, interest, social security, miscellaneous income, records of contributions and medical expenses. To complete the rent credit, we will need the CRP form from your landlord. For the real estate refund, please bring your property tax statement payable in 2012.

This FREE Service is sponsored by the AARP Tax Aide Foundation, the IRS, and the MN Dept of Revenue.

LEGACY FUND PROGRAMMING AT THE ANOKA COUNTY LIBRARIES

"A Recipe to Remember" Scrapbooking Workshop

Family recipes are tried and true — a testament to traditions and bygone methods of measurement. A dram? A pottle? Create a scrapbook page to preserve and showcase heirloom recipes.

Join us to preserve your own family culinary history. Anoka County Library will be hosting "A Recipe to Remember Scrapbooking Workshop," presented by the Minnesota Historical Society on Saturday, February 16, 1 to 3 pm, Crooked Lake Library, 11440 Crooked Lake Blvd, Coon Rapids, 763-576-4695.

Participants will adorn their scrapbook page with a scanned copy of their relative's hand-written recipe, family photos, images from the Minnesota Historical Society's extensive cookbook and menu collection, and decorative papers.

"The best recipes are those handed down through the generations," said Library Board President Bob Thistle. "Create a keepsake of your favorite recipes to share with your family."

The programs are free and open to all ages. To register for these free events, visit anokacountylibrary.org or call your local library.

This program is presented by the Minnesota Regional Public Libraries in partnership with the Minnesota Historical Society and is funded with money from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

The Looney Lutherans at Northtown Library

Live at the Library will feature the Looney Lutherans at Northtown Library, Saturday, February 2 at 2:00 pm.

This program is free and open to the public, but seating may be limited.



Using music, comedy, and some help from the audience, these talented ladies share some of their age old wisdom for living a long and healthy life ... the Lutheran way! But you don't have to be Lutheran to love them. Have you heard of the Lutheran "food wheel?" Here's a hint — all roads lead to hotdish!

"Whether it be green bean casserole or tater tot hotdish, there's always humor to be had in Lutheran lore," said Anoka County Commissioner Carol LeDoux.

"Research continues to show the benefits of laughter in our daily lives," said Library Board Vice President Cathy Montain. "This entertaining show will provide a healthy dose of laughter for all ages."

The Looney Lutherans are presented by GL Berg and Anoka County Library in partnership with MELSA (Metropolitan Library Service Agency). This program is funded with money from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Northtown Library is located at 711 County Road 10 in Blaine. For more information call 763-717-3267 or visit your local library or the website at anokacountylibrary.org.



Election Reform continued from page 5

and those who may not be permitted to vote and that the State is required to determine eligibility before a vote is cast. The MVA says that at the state's polling places people have been presumed as being eligible.

Minnesota Majority's Dan McGrath charged that 48,000 individuals who registered on election day in 2008 have yet to be confirmed as eligible voters — that the Secretary of State's office is four years behind in verifying its database.

The 2010 Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor, Annette Meeks of the Freedom Foundation, testified that she was offering her personal opinions to the committee.

She called for a presidential primary election in Minnesota, and moving up the state primary from August to earlier in the year. She gave many examples of 2012 federal-level candidates across the country who defeated better-funded opponents and or incumbents, and that an earlier primary did not necessarily give a leg up to any candidate. Rep. Dean Urdahl, a Republican from the Litchfield area, asked Meeks if the caucus system should be done away with.

Meeks favors an earlier primary to determine a party's endorsee rather than a caucus, which she said, is "too small to encourage great participation, yet it has a purpose for debating issues."

Meeks also advocates raising state candidate contribution limits to that of U.S. Senate and Congressional candidates, to put them on the same par.



Anoka Conservation District members take oath of office

(Left to right) Jim Lindahl, Karla Komec and Vici Nass were given their oaths of office for another term on the Anoka Conservation District board at their Jan. 22 meeting. The board next meets on Feb. 19 at offices in Ham Lake.

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