



Dear Neighbors:

It is hard to believe that it was **one year ago** that I started walking door to door for the Second Ward City Commission Seat. In April of 2005 I stood at a podium in Riverside Park announcing the decision to run, flanked by Ellen James and Paul Haan...and dozens of dear friends, colleagues, confidants and mentors. Little could I have imagined the journey that lay ahead: one filled with unique experiences, amazing people and countless memories that I will cherish always.

Entering **my fifth month as your Second Ward City Commissioner**, I am getting oriented to the inner-workings of the City. I knew this would be a job requiring time, energy, patience and dedication; what I didn't realize was how much I would truly enjoy the work and opportunities that I have been given.

**My work as a commissioner is similar to social work:** I'm in a position to help, to respond and to listen to people and to be a part of finding solutions. While many of the issues are different, **each impacts someone's quality of life.** I have heard from many constituents, either by phone, email or mail. The concerns expressed include opening wading pools, fixing street lights, dealing with garbage left on the street and questions about what happens to materials that are recycled.

Many of you have joined me at **the first four "Coffee with Bliss"** events. This has been a wonderfully relaxing way to meet and chat or address specific issues. I also met with residents this past month at my first "Meet Your Commissioner Night Out", hosted by Creston Neighborhood Association. I look forward to having quarterly meetings like this with various neighborhood associations.

The **"Bliss for Grand Rapids"** Public Access Show is also going well; I'm starting to get more comfortable interviewing people. The next two shows will be on Neighborhood Ventures, a new organization whose goal is to support and strengthen neighborhood business districts, and The Newberry Place, a new co-housing neighborhood in Belknap. Please contact me if you have ideas for topics: the focus of the show is educational and informational.

This past month the bulk of my time has been spent on learning about the proposed city budget. Each commissioner and the Mayor have studied the large and detailed budget that the City Manager is proposing. Each week we meet for hours, examining every part of the proposal. **A public hearing about the budget will be held on June 6th at 7:00pm at City Hall on the 9th Floor.** In this newsletter you will find a brief summary of the highlights of the proposed budget.

I encourage you to attend the public hearing if you have input to share. As I have said before, please do not hesitate to call me if there is anything I can do to be helpful. It is truly an honor to be your Second Ward City Commissioner.

Respectfully,  
Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss

**"Bliss for GR"** Airs on Public Access Television, Comcast Cable Channel 25, Wednesday Nights at 9 p.m.  
WATCH ONLINE AT WWW.BLISSFORGR.ORG

**Join me at the First Annual Bliss Fundraiser , June 28th at 5:30pm at Marge Potter's home.  
Contact Marge at 942-0368 for more information and/or to RSVP.**

Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss City of Grand Rapids 300 Monroe NW Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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This newsletter was not paid for with Taxpayer dollars

## A Peek at my Schedule for May and June:

- May 9 -  
3rd Annual Mind Share Fundraiser  
for the Student Advancement  
Foundation and the GRPS
- May 10 - Hard Times Cafe meeting
- May 12 - Chamber of Commerce  
Salute to W. Michigan  
Business luncheon
- May 15 - Grand Rapids Police  
Department 23rd  
Annual Awards Ceremony
- May 17 - Grand Rapids Fire  
Department Open House  
Chester Street
- May 18 - Democratic Fundraiser
- May 19-26 - Out of town  
in San Diego for the  
National Prevent  
Child Abuse Conference
- May 29 - Memorial Day Parade
- May 30 - Commencement Speech  
at Gateway High School
- May 31 - Coffee with Bliss at  
Mangiamao's (5:30pm)

## City issues:

The Proposed City Budget: There are a number of changes proposed in the recent 2007 fiscal year budget, many of which were made because of the fiscal crisis faced by our city.

The proposed 2006-2007 general fund budget is approximately \$118,132,000, with 47% coming from income tax, 20% in shared revenue/state grants, 13% in charges for services and 10% in property tax.

Some of the proposed budget highlights include:

- General Local Revenue (GLR) will be funded at \$350,000 which provides support to local non-profits, such as Meals on Wheels, Arbor Circle, and Life Guidance. I strongly supported this funding as it is an investment in people, and often the most vulnerable in our community.
- Three pools (Richmond, Martine Luther King, and Briggs) will be opened along with 11 wading pools and children's water playgrounds (I strongly supported funding to open these pools)
- A new Utilities Department will be created, combining the Water and Environmental Protection Department.
- The plan keeps all eleven fire stations open and operating with sufficient first-line apparatus. Three new medical squads will be added (to take the place of larger fire trucks responding to medical calls).
- Continued funding for after school programs which serve thousands of children each year.
- Adult softball and selected youth baseball programs are planned under a partnership arrangement with the Grand Rapids Area Amateur Softball Association.
- Budget includes \$9.5 million for Streets Capital projects (excluding \$13.9 million in MDOT expenditures on the interstate system).
- Park maintenance will continue at considerably reduced levels with an emphasis on keep facilities clean and safe for park users.
- Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) was included in the budget, which I supported. Some of you may recall that a couple months ago the City Commission passed a resolution declaring our support for National League of Cities Platform including our commitment stands as a ready partner with the Institute for Youth, Education and Families in promoting quality of life for children and families. Supporting the OCYF is in alignment with this commitment.

Again, please contact me if you have input, concerns or questions about the proposed 2007 budget.

## A Peek at my Schedule for May and June:

June 2-4 - Festival

(will be an MC at one of the stages)

June 7 - GVSU's Enrichment Dinner

June 22 - Coffee (or icecream)

with Bliss at 5:30

at Susie's Donut Shop on Knapp

June 28 - 1st Annual Bliss Fundraiser

Contact Marge at 942-0368

for more information and to RSVP.

**CDBG Funding:** Last month I supported a number of recommendations for CDBG funding allocations. The original recommendation cut funding for three neighborhood associations who are collaborating to complete their own administrative work (in previous years, the city did this through a program called GRAND). I along, with my fellow commissioner, worked to have the funding increased – my argument being that neighborhood associations should not be penalized for becoming more independent. In fact, that should be encouraged.

**Rosa Parks Circle - Ice Skating:** This past year, the city was able to forge a partnership with DP Fox Sports and Entertainment, the DDA, LaSalle Bank and Centennial Wireless to open ice skating at Rosa Parks. I am happy to share that that we completed a successful season of ice skating. Due to the success, a similar operation will occur next winter. Sponsors are being sought at this time.

**Special Events:** After much concern voiced by citizens and strong support from the commission (myself included) a new Office of Special Events was formed. The Office of Special Events is funded through a collaboration with the parking department, the DDA, the Grand Rapids Police Department and the City. The office will become part of the Grand Rapids Police Department is presently functional and able to assist setting up special events.

**Garfield Park:** This past month it was announced that the Salvation Army chose the City of Grand Rapids as its location to build the Kroc Center. A piece of property on Division in the Garfield Park Neighborhood has been identified and will be utilized as the site if the grant proposal is approved and the match money is secured. This was a relief in light of the fact that Wyoming was working hard to get the Salvation Army to build in their community. Hopefully we will hear about final approval by the end of the summer.

**Cable TV/Telecommunications Legislation:** There are presently two bills at the state level that have the potential of radically changing the 30 year tradition of contractual regulation for cable television. This legislation is quite concerning to me as it endangers our public access channels – which could be virtually eliminated due to onerous signal delivery requirements. Other concerns that our Cable Administrator Jon Koeze has expressed is the possibility that there would be a dramatic decrease in competition among some cable residents may, the city would loose their ability to manage our rights-of-ways, and some areas/neighborhoods could loose cable access altogether. This practice is called “redlining” whereby neighborhoods are not served because they are not profitable. I encourage you to contact your state legislators to express your concerns. Contact information can be found below.

**Revenue Sharing:** The City of Grand Rapids has experienced significant reductions in State Revenue Sharing that have resulted in decreased City services that support our quality of life in Grand Rapids. State Revenue Sharing comes from sales taxes collected from Grand Rapids that should be returned to Grand Rapids. State Revenue Sharing cuts have had a drastic impact on the City of Grand Rapids, accounting for over 80% of the present budget deficit. There is presently state legislation that is examining the possibility of increasing state revenue sharing to local governments by 2% and tying that increase to outcomes. I encourage you to to contact your state representatives directly and urge them to not only support this bill but also to restore revenue sharing dollars to local governments. You will find their contact information at the end of this newsletter.

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**Commission Meetings:**

May and June

City Commission meetings are scheduled for May 23, June 6, June 13 and June 27.

Committee of the Whole meets at 9:30am on the 6th floor of City Hall and Public meetings take place at 7pm on the 9th floor of City Hall.

City Commission meetings air on Comcast Cable Channel 26 at the following times:  
11 a.m. on Saturday  
3 p.m. on Monday and Thursday  
7 p.m. on Sunday, Tuesday and Friday

**Contact information for your elected state officials:**

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Work (800) 774-1174 E-Mail: [senksikkema@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senksikkema@senate.michigan.gov)

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