



Rosalynn at
Mary Alice Williams'
Retirement



Rosalynn at Wealthy Theatre



Rosalynn at
a charette for
the Creston Corridor



Rosalynn and friends at
the Holiday Hop



Rosalynn with
the cast of Moby
Dick, Easttown Business
Fundraiser

INSIDE:

City Issues, from development to parks
Exciting Local Websites

Dear Neighbors:

The holidays are fast approaching and 2006 is quickly coming to a close. With the transition from one year to the next, it's time to reflect on this past year. 2006...what a memorable year this has been. I feel blessed as I recall the many new experiences I have had and the amazing people I have been able to get to know.

This past year brought a combination of exciting, rewarding, disappointing and frustrating moments. Through it all, my personal philosophy remains the same: focus on resolving problems and finding viable solutions. So often we can get stuck in seeing the glass half empty and feeling defeated. I believe if we look hard enough, we will often find that the glass is actually half full.

Outside of my role as a City Commissioner, I have finally found a healthy balance between my professional social work career and public service. In August I accepted a position with KidsFirst and have since been promoted to the Program Director. KidsFirst is a program within St. Johns Home, an emergency shelter for abused and neglected children in Kent County. KidsFirst serves over 700 of our community's most vulnerable children each year. I feel fortunate to be able to continue to work in child welfare and serve as city commissioner.

My hope for next year is that I will have greater opportunity to participate in work groups that focus on resolving some of the problems that presently face our community. I will strive to be more proactive than ever, examining present and potential problems and working toward finding sustainable solutions. This is how I see the work of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Parks: it is proactive, using creative problem solving and working with our community to find viable answers. I will also continue to serve on the 201 Market Sub-committee, the Economic Development Corporation, City-School Liaison Committee, East Beltline Overlay Committee, Legislative Team, and the Special Committee of City & County Commissioners.

In 2007, I will continue to hold "Coffee With Bliss" each month at a local restaurant, host the Bliss for GR show, continue to maintain my website, and send out quarterly E-newsletters.

I hope you all have a peaceful and blessed holiday season and a very Happy New Year.

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

Garbage Collection: 456-3232 Housing concerns: 456-3053
Street Lights: 456-3281 Sidewalks: 456-3243 Streets: 456-3232
Special Events: 456-3615 Recycling: 456-4444

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This newsletter was not paid for with Taxpayer dollars

Grand Rapids City Commission 2007 Meeting Schedule:

On the dates below, the Commission meets at 9:30 am for the Committee of the Whole on the 6th Floor in Room 601. The Appointments Committee meets at 8:10am, Community Development meets at 8:30am, and Fiscal Committee meets at 8:30am.

The Official meeting is either at 7:00pm or 2:00pm (see schedule below) and this is when there is time for public comment and hearings.

January 9, 7:00pm

January 23, 7:00pm

February 6, 7:00pm

February 20, 7:00pm

March 13, 7:00pm

March 27, 7:00pm

April 10, 7:00pm

April 24, 7:00pm

May 1, 2:00pm

May 15, 7:00pm

May 29, 7:00pm

June 5, 7:00pm

June 19, 2:00pm

July 10, 7:00pm

July 24, 7:00pm

August 14, 7:00pm

August 28, 7:00pm

September 11, 7:00pm

September 25, 7:00pm

October 9, 7:00pm

October 23, 7:00pm

November 13, 7:00pm

November 27, 7:00pm

December 4, 7:00pm

December 18, 7:00pm

City issues:

Free parking for an hour downtown this holiday season

Recently I attended the Neighborhood Business Alliance Awards where a number of local business owners were recognized and honored. I hope that you consider thinking "Outside the Box" and spend some time visiting our many wonderful local shops and galleries this holiday season, as the bulk of money spent at local shops stays here in our community and supports our neighbors. I also encourage you to visit the stores that are located downtown. To alleviate some of your parking woes, between now and December 31st, you can receive an hour of free parking. Simply go to the Downtown Alliance website at www.downtowngr.org and print off a coupon or ask any local merchant.

Ice Skating at Rosa Parks:

Ice skating at Rosa Parks Circle Ice Rink will begin November 24

Hours of Operation: Monday - Thursday, 6:00-9:00 p.m.,

Fridays, 6:00-10:00 p.m., Saturdays, 12:00 Noon-10:00 p.m.,

Sundays, 2:00-9:00 p.m.

Fees: Admission: \$1 for access to the rink and skates are free with ID.

For more information please call the Griff's Icehouse at 235-0303.

Unauthorized Hockey Play at the Rosa Parks Circle Ice Rink is PROHIBITED.

New Service Guides

New service guides for fall 2006 are now printed and available to the public.

They are a great resource that will help you find your way to City information and services for many of your common concerns and needs. Subjects of common concerns are listed alphabetically in the guide. You can obtain a copy of the guide by call me at 456-3858 or the Customer Service line at 456-3000.

Grand Rapids Children's Fund:

In response to the growing needs of children and youth in our community and our strong commitment to improving the lives of children who live in Grand Rapids, I, along with my colleague Commissioner Lumpkins, spearheaded an effort to create the Grand Rapids Children's Fund. Individuals who work and/or live in Grand Rapids will have an opportunity to give to this fund when they pay their city income tax. This year you will find a check off box at the bottom of the form asking if you would like to give a portion of your refund to the GR Children's Fund. This fund will be used to allocate resources to children and youth programs within the city.

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and Recreation:

In November, the Mayor created the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and Recreation and appointed me as chairperson. As many of you know, the city is and has been facing significant budget cuts – with the Parks and Rec Department bearing the brunt of the reduction in resources.

The Mayor created the Parks Commission to address the state of our city parks and to develop a sustainable plan for the future. I believe that our City's parks belong to all of us. They are an integral part of neighborhoods; they contribute to economic development, and are critical to the future health of our city.

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Local websites worth visiting:

www.localfirst.com

Local First is a start-up nonprofit organization whose mission is to support locally owned businesses, farms, and community groups through a variety of initiatives focused on the Triple Bottom Line.

www.rapidgrowthmedia.com

Rapid Growth connects you with the latest growth and investment news about Grand Rapids and its neighborhoods. Featuring original stories and photography, Rapid Growth will have you seeing Grand Rapids differently.

www.downtowngr.org

This is the website to see to learn about downtown's best kept secrets. No matter how well you think you know downtown, you'll learn something new!

www.shopgr.org

Neighborhood Business Association members coordinate services, share best practices, advocate on issues affecting neighborhood business, and promote the economic vitality of our entire community.

www.takeprideingr.com

The "Take Pride in Grand Rapids" initiative as a way for everyone in and around Grand Rapids to learn more about the grand things happening in our city both now and in the future.

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks and Recreation (cont'd):

Preserving and enhancing our parks and green space is a priority to me and I am excited to be a part of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Parks. The Commission is made up of a diverse group of individuals who all bring tremendous skill, expertise and knowledge that will be vital as we brainstorm ideas to maintain and enhance our parks. We began meeting in November and will finish up with providing a report in February 2007.

Grand Rapids Police Department Strategic Plan:

In September, Chief Harry Dolan presented the Commission with the 2007-2009 Strategic Plan for the Grand Rapids Police Department. The plan is a result of input from members of the department and community, which was gathered at various community meetings that took place throughout the city. The plan sets the primary goals for the department over the next two years.

The goal areas include:

- 1) Youth Initiative – focusing on the future of children who live in the City of Grand Rapids
- 2) Crime Prevention and Community Service – focusing on the growing community concerns regarding gangs, drugs and firearms
- 3) Staff Development – focusing on training, leadership, diversity and wellness for department personnel
- 4) Organizational Support – focusing on crime analysis and technology

Renaissance Zone for MBTech Autodie:

I supported a resolution to approve a renaissance zone development agreement for MBTech Autodie, located at 44 Coldbrook Street NW. The property was formerly owned by Autodie, which announced in August that it was closing after a year of downsizing. Shortly after this announcement, a German company called MBTech began negotiations to buy the building and assets in order to start a tool and die business that would utilize lean manufacturing practices in order to be more competitive in the global economy. MBTech asked the City for assistance with the start-up of this new operation by designating the site a Ren Zone. This relief is needed as they train workers and seek new contracts. They asked for a seven year duration of the zone. MBTech agreed to a number of terms including creating 200 jobs by 2010. If the company does not achieve the minimum number of jobs guaranteed, they will pay the City and State the income tax that would have been received from those jobs. The Ren Zone designation is good for the local economy and a solid investment in our community.

Kent County Dispatch Authority:

I supported Grand Rapids participating in a county wide emergency dispatch authority to improve safety. Grand Rapids, along with the County of Kent, City of Grandville, City of Walker, and City of Wyoming will create a legal entity which will be responsible for the implementation of technology integration and operational compatibility of the various emergency police, fire and ambulance dispatching services throughout Kent County. There are many benefits to joining the authority, the primary one being reaching people faster and saving lives.

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Ordinance to Prohibit Smoking:

I supported the Grand Rapids Indoor Clean Air Ordinance, which prohibits smoking in enclosed public and private worksites or public places within the City of Grand Rapids. The ordinance requires that employers adopt a smoking policy and that they post "No Smoking" or similar signs within their establishment.

Establishments that serve food or alcohol, hotels, and private homes are not included in the ordinance. I supported the ordinance because tobacco smoke is a carcinogen that has been proven to cause lung cancer in healthy adult nonsmokers, and increase ones risk of heart disease. I believe this ordinance protects the public health, safety and welfare of citizens, particularly those who chose not to smoke, in our community.

Fluoride Commemorative Sculpture:

On January 25, 1945, Grand Rapids was the first community in the world to reduce tooth decay by adding fluoride to the water supply. The West Michigan Dental Foundation in collaboration with the J.W. Marriot has commissioned Cyril Lixenberg to create a sculpture to celebrate and commemorate that historic event. There will be a new Fluoride Commemorative Sculpture that will be completed in the fall of 2007. The sculpture will be located downtown, just south of the new J.W. Marriot.