

# News Briefs

## Risberg to fill unexpired term on the St. Paul School Board

Jeff Risberg, a member of the Central High School Parent Advisory Council, has been appointed to fill the unexpired term of former St. Paul School Board member Vally Varro, who resigned in December to take a job with a statewide education lobbying organization. Risberg, who will be formally seated at the School Board meeting on Tuesday, February 15, will fill out the remaining 10½ months in Varro's term.

Risberg was one of 10 finalists for the position selected from an initial pool of 41 applicants. The parent of a Central High School student and another child who graduated from Central, Risberg is employed as an impaired-waters coordinator for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. He also serves on an advisory committee for EcoEducation, an organization that works with students, teachers and others in the Twin Cities area in environmental education.

"This is my chance to give back to the district that has given so much to my family," said Risberg, a resident of the Lexington-Hamline neighborhood of St. Paul. "I'm excited to get down to the work of helping meet the challenges that lie ahead while supporting St. Paul's families."

## Federal funding for Central Corridor reaches Capitol Hill

The Central Corridor light-rail transit project has reached another milestone with the Obama administration's forwarding of the Full Funding Grant Agreement to Congress. Following a 60-day "courtesy review" on Capitol Hill, the Federal Transit Administration is expected to disburse half of the \$957 million needed to construct the 11-mile line between the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

About \$145 million has already been spent on design, property acquisition and construction in the Central Corridor. That money has come from the state of Minnesota, Ramsey and Hennepin counties and the Metropolitan Counties Transportation Improvement Board. Another \$590 million in contracts has also been awarded by the Metropolitan Council for the construction of the light-rail line.

President Obama's 2011 budget has yet to receive Congress' blessing, and with the more fiscally conservative Republicans in control of the House, the Central Corridor's funding is not guaranteed. However, Met Council officials have been saying for the past few months that they do not believe the project will fall victim to efforts to cut federal spending on transportation projects.

Utility work began last month on University Avenue west of Hamline Avenue. Construction of the light-rail line from Hamline to the western city limits is scheduled to begin in March. Construction on University Avenue east of Hamline Avenue will follow in 2012. The line is expected to open in 2014.

## UST joins private colleges in seeking liquor license ruling

The West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee has unanimously recommended approval of a bill that would allow Minnesota's private colleges to apply for on-campus liquor licenses. The bill is expected to be introduced in the Minnesota Legislature this month.

The Minnesota Private Colleges Council (MPCC) drafted the bill seeking the enabling legislation. Even if the bill is approved, each of the state's private colleges that want a liquor license would have to apply in their respective cities to obtain one, and those cities could still set license conditions. Possible license condi-

tions include restrictions on the number of events where liquor is served or limits on the hours during which such events are held.

Last year, St. Thomas obtained state approval to seek a liquor license for its Minneapolis campus. A similar request for the St. Paul campus was dropped due to neighborhood opposition.

It is unclear how many of the 17 schools in the MPCC will actually apply to their cities for liquor licenses. About one-third of the campuses are "dry," meaning no liquor is served at all. Another third have indicated that they will continue hiring licensed caterers or using temporary licenses. Others, including St. Thomas, Macalester, St. Mary's of Winona and Concordia-Moorhead, are considering applying for their own licenses.

During years 2008-2010, 88 events were held at St. Thomas that involved the consumption of alcohol, according to Doug Hennes, vice president for university and governmental relations. Of those, 40 were internal events, such as school receptions and reunions. Of the 48 held by outside groups, 34 were wedding receptions. Most of the events were held at the Binz Refectory on the south campus.

The cost is the primary reason for seeking the enabling state legislation and city liquor license, Hennes said. It would not only save money for St. Thomas, but would reduce the cost for outside groups that periodically rent campus facilities.

## Federal grant to help clean up pollution along Hiawatha Ave.

Hennepin County's Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project has received \$100,000 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify, prioritize and address environmental health risks in the Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor in Minneapolis.

This area of the eastern Phillips and western Longfellow neighborhoods has served as a rail, highway and utility services corridor for decades. It remains a hub of industrial activity today. The project will consider all potential environmental risks along the corridor, including indoor and outdoor air quality, hazardous waste, lead paint, radon, water quality and industrial contaminants.

The Longfellow Community Council and Women's Environmental Institute will help lead the project.

## PPL housing, University-Prior planning benefit from grants

The St. Paul City Council voted on February 2 to accept a total of \$704,550 in grants from the Metropolitan Council for several projects citywide. The grants are from the Metropolitan Council's Livable Communities Development Account.

Project for Pride in Living received \$233,550 for an affordable housing development on West 7th and Springfield streets in Highland Park. The apartment building will have a total of 44 units of supportive housing, 10 of which will be reserved for families who have been or are at risk of becoming homeless.

A project to redevelop the area around the intersection of Prior and University avenues received \$47,000 in planning funds. The redevelopment is expected to follow construction of the Central Corridor light-rail line along University.

Other grants included \$63,000 for a commercial development at Phalen Village on the city's East Side and \$361,000 to help pay for the construction of the Fifth Street Lofts downtown.

*News Briefly was compiled by Jane McClure and Dale Mischke.*

# Reduce Your Payment.

## Refinance with Wings!



- One low rate – not “as low as”
- Any vehicle, new or used, purchase or refinance
- Fast & easy online application

Membership now open to the 13-county metro area!

**CALL TODAY!**

**1 888 692-5626 (LOANS)**

[www.wingsfinancial.com](http://www.wingsfinancial.com)

**Now open! 1804 W. 7th St., St. Paul**

Additional branches in Apple Valley, Bloomington, Eagan & Edina

\*The above Annual Percentage Rate will be increased by 1/2% if an active Wings Financial checking account and recurring net direct payroll deposit are not maintained. Rates effective as of 2/2/11 and are subject to change at any time. Wings Financial Credit Union is federally insured by NCUA.

**Wings**  
FINANCIAL