

Aurora

From the Mayor's Office



JULY
2014
VOL
1



Enjoy Aurora's Beautiful Parks and Land!

Dear Neighbor,

Geauga Lake Rezoning Initiative Wins!



THANK YOU to the residents of Aurora for supporting Issue 11, rezoning the Geauga Lake Development District to mixed-use, by more than 81% of the vote! Mixed-use zoning provides a variety of development opportunities by allowing the blending of residential, commercial, business, cultural, governmental and entertainment uses.

My team is now hard at work writing regulations to guide development in the new district. Meanwhile, developers and potential buyers have been showing renewed interest in light of the rezoning.

Thank you for supporting our vision!

Ann Womer Benjamin, Mayor

The city is working hard to open up some of our properties for your use. Spring Hill Farm, on E. Pioneer Trail, has a new path around the lake and we are securing the buildings there so in the near future you will be able to hike and fish. Newly acquired Hartman Farm, on Townline Road, consists of about 125 acres and will be ideal for new playing fields as we need them. In addition, the rear of the property contains a new and working sugar house, which supplied maple syrup this year for auction at the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast, thanks to Michael Armour and his family who made the syrup. The Moebius Nature Center on E. Mennonite Road is truly a showpiece through the hard work of a core of volunteers who maintain the beautiful



Discover Aurora's best-kept secret... Moebius Nature Center, 929 E Mennonite Rd
For more information: www.mymnc.org

gardens, picnic pavilion, and meeting house. Keep your eyes open for improvements at Sunny Lake Park, considered the gem of Aurora. Parks and Recreation Director Jim Kraus is working to expand bathrooms, concessions and parking at the park, and will be installing a disc golf course, fun for all ages.

Did you know? 81% of Aurora's tax revenue comes from our business and industrial base.

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Aurora Service Department Meets Snow and Flood Challenges

This past winter was challenging on many levels, but the Aurora Service Department crews worked tirelessly to keep roads plowed and potholes repaired. Through it

all Service Director John Trew also closely monitored spending on salt and overtime, and spent \$14,000 less in 2014 for more salt than in 2013. Since the May 12, 2014 major rain storm, the city has stepped up efforts to monitor and clean culverts,

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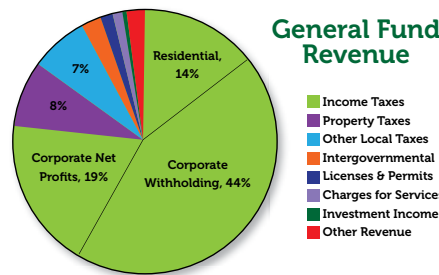
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drains and retention ponds which are in city rights of way to mitigate future storm water issues. We have also been meeting with residents to assess their individual issues. Some of the problems can be attributed to simple home maintenance steps and

will be incorporated into a city brochure on the topic. In the case of flooding in the Geauga Lake area, however, city crews discovered after the storm that a significant storm water retention pond in Bainbridge was blocked, causing it to overflow immediately in the heavy rains.

Snapshot of Aurora's Finances

Did you know that 77% of Aurora's revenue comes from income taxes? Eighty-one percent of that comes from corporate withholding and corporate net profits, which means that the business and industrial base in Aurora provides the vast majority of Aurora's funding. Of the real estate taxes that Aurora property owners pay,



only 9% comes to the city while 77% goes to Aurora City Schools. Finance Director Bob Paul carefully manages Aurora's finances, and has done so for 25 years.

Supporting Aurora Businesses Is Good for Aurora

Aurora's businesses are important to all of us:

- Their success means we have more revenue in our coffers from taxes (see pie chart above) to help finance park and ball field maintenance, storm water control, and other projects.
- Active businesses mean we have fewer empty and declining store fronts or industrial properties.
- They provide many options to residents as

well as visitors who want to eat here, play here, and spend their money here, again providing revenue and activity promoting our city.

Economic Development Director Jack Burge and I are committed to working with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and individual businesses and companies as they seek to improve or expand their operations, heighten visibility and awareness, and promote our city. Let's support them!

Six Month Accomplishments....

- A **budget with overtime reductions and cost savings** in health insurance.
- A new **business-friendly sign code** that also includes Historic District requirements.
- **Passage of Issue 11** creating the Geauga Lake Development District and new opportunities.
- New **Law Director, Planning, Zoning and Building Director and Police Chief.**
- A new **Assistant Director of Planning** to add depth and flexibility to our department.
- **Sixteen Charter change recommendations** from the Charter Review Commission.
- Commencement of the **river restoration work** at the Aurora golf course.
- A **plan for downtown improvements** at Kiwanis-Moore Park.
- **New gas aggregation plan** with Constellation for 17-month rate of \$4.65/Mcf.
- **Action on storm water issues**, including close monitoring and cleaning of drains and retention basins, meeting with many residents in affected areas, and improving drainage in city rights of way.



Ball Field Facts

Aurora manages 16 ball fields, not all of which are on city property. While the city maintains all the fields (dragging dirt, lining baselines, mowing grass, painting foul lines and setting bases), the city is not responsible for capital improvements on the school-owned fields, fields 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 (fencing, backstop, dug-outs). Teams do not use all 16 fields, and it is not a good use of taxpayer dollars to maintain all 16 fields when only 14 fields are needed. Therefore, the small t-ball field, Field 3, was scheduled to be closed eventually. Other city land is available for new ball fields in the future as the city needs them.

So...this administration proposed, and Planning Commission and Council approved, a plan to improve the center of town with **enhancements at Kiwanis-Moore Park:**

- **a new, larger and improved ball field, Field 4, replacing the t-ball field;**
- **a landscaped walkway to the ball fields and businesses along 43; and**

- **expanded, landscaped parking.**

This plan was developed with much thought and consideration, taking into account the Master Plan recommendations to improve the Town Center, the Planning Commission's and Planning Department's parking concerns, baseball needs, recreational usage and city resources. This project efficiently uses funds dedicated for land acquisition and improvements, NOT connectivity or field maintenance money.

The implementation of this entire project is important to the community, but a small group is challenging its funding. This project is not about losing Field 3; it is about gaining a better field in the completion and enhancement of Field 4, expanding parking to support parents and kids playing ball or enjoying the park, and providing a walkway for everyone to better access the adjacent fields and businesses. Support a better Kiwanis-Moore Park by supporting this project.

Message from Council

Hello Aurora Residents!

The first six months of 2014 seem to have flown by. Council has been busy since January getting three new Council members on board, and working with a new Mayor and some new people in the Administration. We successfully approved budget appropriations for 2014 which included funds for the much talked about "connectivity" in our town to begin. While it will be a slow process, at least the first steps have been taken to accomplish our vision for the future. Many projects have been approved that will allow our businesses to expand and grow while making improvements for all residents to enjoy. Council helped support – and you, the residents, passed – a rezoning for the old Geauga Lake area properties – another major step to making our "Best Hometown" be ALL THAT IT CAN BE. Thank you for getting out to vote in a mid-year election. Have a wonderful and safe summer.

Department Highlight

The end of June, Police Chief Seth Riewaldt ended a 35-year career with Aurora's Police Department, to date the longest serving police officer in the city. We wish him well! David Frisone has been named the new Police Chief, expected to begin the end of August. Dave is currently the Executive Director of the Lake County Narcotics Agency in Painesville and served as the Chief of Police in Canal Fulton from



David Frisone

2005 to 2011. He began his police career with the Cuyahoga Falls Police Department in 1995. A colonel in the United States Army Reserve, Dave received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Akron and also completed training at the FBI National Academy at Quantico, Virginia, in 2007. Lt. Rob Hagquist will serve as Interim Chief until Dave begins.



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Keep in Touch!

It's an honor to serve this beautiful community. Aurora has much to offer and our employees are committed to excellence and service to our residents and businesses. I have an open door policy and welcome your thoughts and ideas.



The Aurora City staff, from left, Dave Barnes, Fire Chief; Jack Burge, Economic & Entrepreneurial Development Director; Dean DePiero, Law Director; John Trew, Director of Public Services; Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin; James Kraus, Parks & Recreation Director; Seth Riewaldt, former Police Chief; Robert Carter, Human Resources Administrator; Robert Paul, Finance Director. Not pictured is Denise Januska, Planning, Zoning & Building Director.

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Please call me at
330-995-9123,
or email me at
mayor@auroraoh.com.

Thank you for working with us!

Police/Fire Emergency – 911

City Hall – 330-562-6131

City Council – 330-995-9125

Mayor's Office – 330-995-9126

Parks & Recreation –
330-562-4333

Planning, Zoning & Building –
330-562-9564

Service – 330-995-9116

Water & Utilities – 330-995-9109

The City has a new Fire Engine

The city's new Rosenbauer engine was delivered to Aurora in December 2013, with funding from the Fire/Paramedic Levy. It replaces a 1988 fire engine, has a 1500 GPM pump and carries 750 gallons of water. The new engine made its debut this spring and pumped approximately 70,000 gallons of water out of Silver Creek at the Garrettsville fire under the supervision of Chief Dave Barnes and his crew.

