



The City of Albert Lea

Volume 2, Number 1

Winter, 2004

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Notes from the Mayor, Jean Eaton...

Dear Community,

Albert Lea is so fortunate to have many excellent services such as a responsive fire department, carefully maintained streets, a well stocked public library, and a newer city pool and arena. These are services and facilities we often take for granted but which many communities across the state, and even the country, are facing the prospect of cutting. Fortunately, Albert Lea hasn't yet had to make these types of decisions.

Local Government Aid (LGA), a state paid property tax relief program, supplies Albert Lea with 56% of the city's general fund revenue. This aid has enabled the city to provide a full menu of services including police and fire protection, snow plowing and street maintenance, and recreation and library services. LGA has enabled the city to provide these services for many years at very low local property tax levels.

However, Albert Lea will receive \$5,358,000 in LGA dollars for 2004 or \$1,050,000 less than the city received in 2003. The state has varied it's LGA funding dramatically the past several years. While the state increased the aid in 2002, it also reduced our city levy limit by over \$1,000,000. LGA was reduced in 2003, again in 2004 and likely will be reduced yet again in 2005 given the reality of continued budget shortfalls at the state level. The net effect of the state budget problems has been an overall reduction in funds available to balance our city budget.

The city council has addressed the loss of LGA revenue by proposing reductions in general city spending and raising our revenues by increasing our levy and certain fees. We have made cuts in the following areas: Parks and Recreation, City Garage, Storm Sewer maintenance, Inspection Department, Library, Lake improvement, Tree budget, City Arena and contingency funds. The minimal increase in our levy of 7.5% permitted us to avoid major layoffs and reductions in our basic services. This will balance our budget for 2004.

With the continued budget problems at the state level and the shift toward funding metro area priorities, we must continue to lobby the state legislature to help them understand the important role Local Government Aid plays in keeping our rural Minnesota communities strong. Please also join me in thanking our legislator, Representative Dan Dorman, for his strong support for our community and his efforts to maintain LGA this past session.

Jean B. Eaton

Local Sales Tax Option

The City of Albert Lea has completed a public opinion study regarding the public support for a sales tax for lake cleanup. 376 residents of the community were contacted by telephone and asked questions concerning their opinion on a possible sales tax, on lake cleanup, on the importance of the lakes to the Albert Lea community and whether they would support a sales tax in an election. The representative sample called was randomly selected to be a crosscut of the community.

In general, the public supported a sales tax for lake cleanup and felt the lakes were very important to the future of our community. Copies of the study will be available for the public from the City Manager's office.

Albert Lea Listens

Hopefully by now many Albert Lea area residents have taken the opportunity to participate in an Albert Lea Area Listens session. It is the goal of this project to have every resident participate and be part of deciding the future direction for the greater community.

If you have not had an opportunity to participate and would like to do so, please call the Chamber of Commerce at 373-3938 or the City Planning office at 377-4316.

Congratulations on your retirement!

Dave Olson has retired after 38 years of service with the City of Albert Lea Engineering Department and Public Works. We wish him well as he begins a new and exciting phase in his life!

Albert Lea Business Development Center

Exciting things are happening at the Albert Lea Business Development Center in the Northaire Industrial Park. ALBDC recently welcomed two new tenants bringing our total number of businesses to nine!

Day Lily Enterprise, Inc. owned by Nancy Jensen moved into the center December 1. Jensen creates customized planners for organizations & individuals.

Sue Nielsen, owner of Cookie Sue joined the center on November 1. Nielsen provides homemade goodness in the form of cookies, cakes, pies, and bars.

For more information on how we can help make your entrepreneurial dream come true, call the ALBDC at 373-3930.

Outdoor Ice Rinks Warming House Schedule

Academy, Hawthorne, Lakeview, and Hayek Park buildings will be open for outdoor ice rinks. Outdoor ice season will begin when weather permits.

Monday - Friday 4:00-8:00 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 1:00-8:00 p.m.

Change Those Batteries!

The Albert Lea Fire Department would like to remind you to install a new battery in your smoke detector. Smoke detectors do save lives! After installing a new battery, test your detector by pushing the "test" button to make sure it is operating correctly.

Firefighters will come to your house and install a smoke detector with a ten year battery at no cost to the homeowner. If you would like one of these units please contact the Albert Lea Fire Department at 507-377-4340.

Albert Lea Remembers

Everyone has a story! In honor of Albert Lea's upcoming Sesquicentennial, the Library has established a new program, "Albert Lea Remembers". This program is a community partnership of the Albert Lea Public Library and the Friends of the Library, the Albert Lea Area Schools Community Education, the Freeborn County Historical society and Joan Claire Graham, author of "Minnesota Memories" and local resident. Our goal is to produce a book of true stories of Albert Lea and the surrounding Freeborn County.

If you are interested in telling your story or participating, we invite you to call the Albert Lea Public Library at 377-4350.

Thank You Library Volunteers and FRIENDS!

The Albert Lea Public Library would like to thank all its volunteers. From Daycare Delivery to Senior Outreach - we couldn't do it without you! Thank you so much!

Family/Caregiver Series on Alzheimer's and Related Dementia

TOPIC SCHEDULE:

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| January 5 - 2 p.m. | Understanding memory loss. |
| January 26 - 2 p.m. | Partnering with your doctor. |
| February 2 - 6:30 p.m. | Understanding & managing difficult behaviors. |
| February 9 - 2 p.m. | Structuring the day with meaningful activities. |
| February 16 - 6:30 p.m. | Understanding future care options. |
| February 23 - 2 p.m. | Planning for future legal and financial issues. |
| March 1 - 6:30 p.m. | Safety concerns: Driving, wandering, and the home. |

All classes will be held at the Albert Lea Senior Center, Skyline Mall, 1739 W. Main St., Albert Lea. You may come to all 8 sessions or attend only those you are interested in. The classes are FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. This program is made possible through the Alzheimer's Assoc. and Freeborn Mower Cooperative Service Members. If you have any questions, call the Senior Center at 507-373-0704.



Albert Lea
Community Theatre
Swing
February 4-7 & 11-14

City of Albert Lea Additional Contacts

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Library Director, Lori Barkema
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|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Water Bill | 377-4301 |
| Building Permits | 377-4340 |
| City Garage | 377-4377 |
| Street Department | 377-4378 |
| Dog Catcher | 377-5215 |
| City Arena | 377-4374 |
| City Pool | 373-3328 |
| Civic Theater | 377-4371 |
| Senior Center | 373-0704 |
| Adult Library | 377-4350 |
| Children's Library | 377-4356 |

The City of Albert Lea newsletter is published quarterly by the City of Albert Lea to keep citizens informed about services, programs and issues in the community. Comments or suggestions are welcome and should be sent to the Albert Lea Public Library, 211 E. Clark St., Albert Lea, MN 56007 or email us at lbarkema@city.albertlea.org.