

Call The Roll

An E-Publication of Columbus City Council

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thank you for taking a moment to read the latest edition of *Call the Roll*, the monthly electronic newsletter from Columbus City Council.

As a lifelong resident of Columbus who grew up on the city's West Side, I have always felt that the true fabric of a community can be found in its neighborhoods. I also strongly believe that our neighborhood groups and civic organizations—working in conjunction with the City—have helped Columbus grow and prosper like few other Midwestern cities have been able to do in recent decades.

Now, City Council is prepared to help strengthen these neighborhood organizations even more. With the leadership of Development Committee Chair [Maryellen O'Shaughnessy](#), we have empanelled a first-of-its-kind work group to study the relationship between area commissions, civic associations and city government. This historic group will work throughout the summer to create a report, and then present their findings to Council in the autumn. We look forward to hearing these recommendations, which will help all neighborhood organizations interact more efficiently and effectively with City Hall.



President Mentel speaking at a recent Neighborhood Pride kick-off.

Of course, one of the most important ways to strengthen our neighborhoods is to promote jobs and economic development in the region. We were pleased to see Columbus-based Skybus Airlines take flight in May. Along with providing low fares for consumers, Skybus is expected to create close to 1,000 new jobs in Columbus due to the performance-based incentive program offered by the City.

Another major milestone was the announcement of the \$80 million redevelopment of the former Northland Mall site. With the visionary leadership of Mayor Michael B. Coleman, the efforts of the Columbus Urban Growth Corporation, and the infrastructural investments by City Council, this abandoned site along Morse Road once again will become a beacon of pride and economic vitality in the Northland area.

During the past month City Council also continued to promote neighborhood safety by working to provide new cruisers, motorcycles, and canine units for the Police Division. Council is also working with the administration on the Capital Improvements Budget, which will provide an additional \$6.8 million for new fire trucks.

Please be sure to take a look at the rest of *Call the Roll* for other notable events. Until next time, have a safe and happy beginning to your summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael C. Mentel".

Michael C. Mentel
Council President

REBIRTH OF NORTHLAND MALL

Northland Mall originally opened in 1964 and served for decades as the center of economic growth for Columbus' North Side. The mall closed October 31, 2002, with demolition of the approximately 90-acre site beginning in early 2004.

The Ohio Department of Taxation (ODT) already has redeveloped the former Lazarus department store on the site. The building currently serves close to 1,000 ODT workers. Now Columbus Urban Growth Corporation, the non-profit development entity for the City of Columbus, is teaming up with Stonehenge Corporation to build "Northland Village," a mixed-use retail, restaurant, and office space site tied together with parks and common areas. Councilmember [Hearcel F. Craig](#) once lived a short distance from Northland Mall and applauded the effort to breathe new life into the Morse Road corridor.



Councilmember Hearcel Craig spoke about restoring economic vitality to the Morse Road corridor and the former Northland Mall site.

"This exciting announcement is another example of the City's commitment to the Northland area community," stated Councilmember Hearcel F. Craig.



City Council originally invested in rebuilding the Morse Road corridor with the hope of attracting private sector development like Northland Village. The end result will be a real asset for the Northland community and a point of pride for all of Columbus.

(Top) The current site, located along Morse Road, will be transformed into a vibrant, bustling shopping mall filled with stores, restaurants, and offices.

(Right) An artist's rendition of the completed mall.



ZOO DAYS AT COUNCIL

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium brought some furry friends to Council Chambers to highlight a popular summer partnership between the Zoo and City Hall. The Melvin B. Dodge Zoo Days Program, named after the former director of the Recreation and Parks Department, provides transportation and admission to the Zoo for children from 30 City playgrounds and Recreation Centers.

Jerry Borin, executive director of the Zoo, allowed Councilmembers to get acquainted with a dingo, serval cat and wallaby as he thanked them for the City's continued support.

"It's fun to see the kids come through the door. They are excited, they have a day out, and they're taking a little trip," said Borin. "They get lunch, they get to see the animals, they get some special programs presented and it's a terrific thing to do for our youth."

"Our Zoo enriches the lives of all who visit there," said Recreation and Parks Committee Chair [Priscilla Tyson](#). "I'm really happy that the City offers a program like this to allow our young people to have an opportunity to see all the animals and experience our wonderful Columbus Zoo and Aquarium."

For more information on the Zoo Days program contact your local Rec Center. To find a Recreational Center in your area call (614) 645-3300, or visit the Department of Recreation and Parks [website](#).



Council President Mentel (top) and Council Member Priscilla Tyson (left) get up close and personal with a serval cat from the Columbus Zoo. (Photos courtesy of John Matuszak, Columbus Messenger)

COLUMBUS STRIKE FORCE

It is going to be a long hot summer for criminals in Columbus as the Mayor and Columbus Police begin another Summer Strike Force. Safety Committee Chair [Andrew Ginther](#) helped announce that the Summer Strike Force will stretch from the spring to the fall.



Safety Chair Andrew J. Ginther speaks during the announcement of the Summer Strike Force.

"The summer safety initiative puts our officers on the offensive, doing what they do best to fight crime in our neighborhoods," said Ginther. "I urge every Columbus citizen to do their part to make their neighborhood a safe place for children to play this summer."

This year the City will spend one million dollars on the Summer Strike Force; up 33 percent from 2006. Police officers will concentrate on removing felons, guns, and drugs off the streets. Since the Strike Force began two years ago, the brave men and women of the Columbus Division of Police have made 700 arrests and have taken nearly 250 illegal guns off the streets.

DEMOLITION OF WOODLAND MEADOWS COMPLEX



(L to R) Councilmembers Ginther, Tavares, and Craig were present as the Mayor and a wrecking crew began to tear down the Woodland Meadows apartment complex.

The demolition of “Public Enemy #1” is now underway. In April, Councilmembers approved a contract worth \$2,400,000 to bring down the Woodland Meadows apartment complex, which had become a haven for criminal activity. The East Side site had been abandoned since August of 2006.

“We tried to make this work,” said Health, Housing and Human Services Committee Chair [Charleta Tavares](#). “We tried to work with the property owner and the area residents to make this a workable project. Unfortunately, this was an experiment gone bad. Now we’re happy to see the Mayor and all our partners help eliminate this blight.”

Mayor [Michael B. Coleman](#) got behind the wheel of some heavy equipment to start the demolition process. A series of serious maintenance issues that the property owner could not fix forced the City to ask the Environmental Court to condemn the property and

move out hundreds of families. The City helped relocate many of those who were displaced.

“Beyond the code violations, public nuisance, health concerns, beyond the fact that hundreds of Columbus residents were displaced, more than an example of blight, this was a death trap,” said Safety Committee Chair [Andrew J. Ginther](#). “Woodland Meadows endangered the well-being and safety of the people who lived here.”

“This is about the lives of our residents, the quality of life of our residents and that’s what makes this day so important,” said Judiciary and Court Administration Committee Chair [Hearcel Craig](#). “I think the buildings must come down and hope needs to go up.”



Councilmember Andrew J. Ginther watches as demolition of the Woodland Meadows apartment complex gets underway. The Columbus Fire Department used its high pressure water hoses to help keep dust and debris to a minimum.

SKYBUS TAKES FLIGHT

Columbus' "hometown airline" seems to be a hit with customers.

Skybus took flight May 22nd, with destinations across the U.S. It does not take long to identify what makes Skybus different from other carriers. The airline is offering fares for as little as \$10 a seat.

Council President [Michael C. Mentel](#) held a special public hearing at Port Columbus International Airport with Skybus officials to learn how the City's economic incentive package has helped the airline get off the ground. If Skybus can achieve certain employment and payroll goals, the company could receive up to \$14,000,000 in various tax incentives from the City.



Members of Council question Skybus President and COO Ken Gile (far right) about job creation, the company's vision, and the sustainability of its business plan.

Skybus President and COO Ken Gile outlined the company's business model and promised City Council that the airline would invest in the Columbus workforce to help make the company a success.



(Top, L to R) Skybus CEO Bill Diffenderffer, Port Columbus CEO Elaine Roberts and City Council President Michael C. Mentel celebrate the ribbon-cutting for Skybus at Port Columbus.



(Right) CEO Roberts and Council President Mentel await the first passengers of Skybus' maiden voyage.



COUNCIL HOSTS ARTS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The pieces of the puzzle that make up the “creative economy” are falling into place. That is the news coming from a steering committee created by City Council to study the arts and how they are funded in Columbus.

“Uncoordinated and piecemeal efforts do not constitute a strategic vision,” said Dr. Wayne Lawson, who headed the Creative Columbus Steering Committee.

The group began one year ago to study every facet of the Columbus arts community. Their mission was to answer a complicated question, how to expand support for long-standing arts organizations while developing new partnerships to make the arts community a vital source of economic and cultural growth in the city.



(L-R) Councilmembers Ginther, Craig, Tavares, Tyson, O'Shaughnessy, and President Pro Tem Kevin L. Boyce discussed the role of the arts community in the future of Columbus' economy.

“I think what we have here is the framework for putting the puzzle together,” said Lawson. “And I think if we’re going to talk about the creative economy, we need to have the framework and we need to move forward.” The Steering Committee produced several dozen ideas to move the Columbus arts community forward, which include fostering young artists and providing space for them, as well as building endowments for major arts organizations.

Council President Pro Tem [Kevin L. Boyce](#) wants to make sure the City maximizes every dollar Columbus gives to the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC). GCAC is the non-profit partner with the City to promote arts in Columbus. In May, City Council voted to allocate more than \$4,000,000 from the Hotel/Motel Excise Tax Fund to GCAC. In return, arts experts say their community has a \$330,000,000 impact on the Columbus economy.



President Pro Tem Boyce (Left) stressed the importance of looking at the issues from a long-term financial perspective. Councilmember O'Shaughnessy (Right) promoted the development of a comprehensive message that will improve the Columbus arts scene in the future.



representatives on the GCAC Board of Trustees. “A thriving arts community is essential to our economic future,” said O'Shaughnessy. “We need to have a cohesive and inclusive arts message that we take forward.” To implement its recommendations, the Steering Committee suggests creating a Cultural Planning Committee. Council would appoint a liaison to the group.

“This person will be able to keep Council informed on what needs to be done to promote and sustain the arts community,” said Recreation and Parks Committee Chair [Priscilla Tyson](#). Before joining Council earlier this year, Tyson served on the Steering Committee.

“When I took over as Finance Chair I felt like we were not maximizing the return on our investment,” said Boyce, who helped call for the study in May of 2006. “We have to set a standard of accountability for the arts community.”

Development Committee Chair [Maryellen O'Shaughnessy](#) serves as one of Council's



Councilmember Tyson discussed the necessity of communication between Council and the arts community.

SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY MEETING



South Side residents had an opportunity to speak one-on-one with all seven members of Council and City Attorney [Richard C. Pfeiffer](#) during a special meeting at the Barack Recreation Center. The residents discussed a wide range of neighborhood issues such as zoning questions, nuisance complaints and suggestions on how to improve communication between City Hall and area constituents.

“We always appreciate the type of dialogue that we had here,” said Council President [Michael C. Mentel](#). “Councilmembers are listening and taking action, following up with Mayor Coleman’s staff and other City Departments to help these residents any way we can.”

Council President Mentel promised to hold additional meetings in other areas of Columbus in the upcoming months. Debra Diggs, President of the South Side Community Action Network was pleased with the turnout and the response from City Council.

“They say put your money where your mouth is,” said Diggs. “And they put their money where their mouths are. We know that Council is for the South Side.”



(Top) Councilmembers Andrew J. Ginther and Priscilla R. Tyson speak with South Side residents.



(Left) A South Side resident engages Council President Pro Tem Kevin L. Boyce.

NEIGHBORHOOD WORK GROUP



Council President Mentel and Councilmember O'Shaughnessy announced the formation of a panel consisting of representatives from area commissions and civic associations.

City Council is initiating a new era of collaboration between City Hall and area commissions and civic associations in Columbus. City Council President [Michael C. Mentel](#) and Development Chair [Maryellen O'Shaughnessy](#) have formed a panel to study the role of neighborhood groups and their interaction with city government. This is the first time since the creation of area commissions that City Council has taken this step.

“To the best of my knowledge, we are making history with the formation of this work group,” said Mentel. “Area commissions and civic organizations have served an instrumental role in the growth of Columbus in the past. Now, we want our civic leaders to take the next step and tell us how City Council can help them function even more effectively and efficiently in the 21st century.”

The work group includes a representative from each of the 14 Columbus area commissions and select civic associations. The members offer perspectives from large and small neighborhood organizations, and will be led by Gary L. Baker, II—chair of the Greater Hilltop Area Commission.

“One of the first things we’ll be doing is deciding our rules and procedures,” said Baker. Since this panel is a public body, all business must be conducted in accordance with Ohio’s Sunshine Laws. “This is a history-making effort and I’m proud to be a part of it.”

The all-volunteer work group will meet twice a month during the summer to produce a report of their recommendations to improve Columbus’ neighborhoods.

“This approach will allow the members of the work group to tell us how we can help them improve the daily operation of neighborhood organizations,” said O’Shaughnessy. “Ultimately, we are hoping that this panel will produce a report that addresses broad-ranging, long-term solutions that can be universally applied to all neighborhood groups throughout Columbus.”



The work group will provide Council with a holistic view of the issues facing neighborhoods. Council has requested the representatives work together to create a comprehensive report concerning the role of neighborhood groups and their interaction with City government.

The collaborative effort will be managed by Gary L. Baker, II (left), chair of the Greater Hilltop Area Commission.

The work group is expected to submit a list of recommendations to City Council in the fall.

WADING LITTLE DARBY CREEK



Councilmember O'Shaughnessy enjoyed a first-hand glimpse of some of the local wildlife native to the Little Darby Creek.

Central Ohio is home to some of the most pristine waterways in the United States and the efforts of Development Committee Chair [Maryellen O'Shaughnessy](#) will help protect these natural resources for future generations. O'Shaughnessy joined a group of ecologists and nature enthusiasts to wade into the Little Darby Creek at the Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park. The group studied a wide variety of animals, from fish to freshwater mussels and insects.

"We don't have mountains or beaches in Columbus, but we do have amazing geologic features like our creeks, rivers, streams and ravines," said O'Shaughnessy. "My goal would be to restore every other waterway to the quality of the Little and Big Darby."

Councilmember O'Shaughnessy continues to work with local governments and developers in the Big Darby

Accord to make sure growth in the region does not adversely affect these precious natural resources.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call The Roll is coming to a small screen near you. With the help of the talented crew at GTC-3, the City-run cable channel, Council's electronic publication will be adding a video format this summer.

"GTC-3 is excited to augment our coverage of Council legislative action with a more in-depth look at the issues that come before Council," said Mary Nordstrom, Cable Television Manager for Columbus.

Call The Roll will allow area residents to go beyond the "sound bites" they see on the evening newscast, to learn more about the programs and projects that impact their lives. It is also a great way for City Council to connect with Columbus like never before.



GTC-3 airs on Time Warner Cable channel 3, Insight Cable channel 3, and WOW Cable channel 3.