

MCC to participate in March 19 mayoral forum

The Miller Citizens Corp. has joined a coalition of civic and religious organizations to sponsor a forum for mayoral candidates in the upcoming primary election. The other members of The Coalition include the Central District Organizing Project (CDOP), the NAACP, the Gary Urban League, and the Intracity Student Council, along with various sororities, fraternities, and churches. Their aim is to help Gary residents be active and informed about political affairs in their city.

The mayoral forum will be held on Saturday, March 19 from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm in the Lake Room of the Genesis Center at Fifth Avenue and Broadway in Gary.

All fifteen declared candidates for mayor have been invited and are expected to attend. Each candidate will have a chance to respond to questions on a variety of topics, including

- City budget/bankruptcy**
- Abandoned buildings/blight/beautification**
- Infrastructure**
- Economic development**
- Gary and Region Investment Project (GRIP)**
- Education**
- Youth**
- Technology**
- Recidivism**
- Green Gary**

This is your one chance to hear from the whole array of candidates how they would deal with the critical issues facing our city. Take advantage of the opportunity!

MCC joins Urban League

At their February board meeting, the MCC Board of Directors voted, as an organization, to join the Urban League of Northwest Indiana. This will allow the MCC to appoint a representative who can

take part in standing committees of the Urban League and participate, with them, in the affairs of the Region.

The Urban League is dedicated to citizen empowerment in the areas of education and youth; economic development; health and quality of life; civic involvement and leadership; and civil rights. These are areas of activity which closely parallel the efforts of the MCC in the Miller community. In particular, the Urban League's JOB Board and their interest in health and wellness parallel ideas which MCC board members would like to develop.

Garbage issue still pending

A number of Gary residents have challenged the legality of the city's garbage collection fee, contending that it was not properly enacted by the Gary Common Council. In his ruling last fall, Judge Francis Webber upheld the legality of the council action, but the lawyers who are involved in the suit – John Reed, Doug Grimes, and Greg Reising – believe the judge is mistaken, and they have obtained a certified transcript of the Council Meeting at which the issue was considered, to support their claim. They have submitted the transcript with a “correction of fact” appeal to the judge, and **a hearing on the subject has been scheduled for May.**

The MCC is not directly involved in this suit, and MCC board members are divided in their opinions on whether to proceed with the case if Judge Webber does not change his mind. One group sees this as a matter of principle which we should take to the Court of Appeals if necessary. The other group sees it as an unpopular issue, with little to gain even if we win the suit. This view is substantiated by a poll of Gary City Council members, who affirm that they would again vote to pass the fee ordinance if it were reintroduced.

At their February meeting, the MCC directors discussed whether the MCC should be involved in raising money to support an appeal of the issue, but the subject was tabled without action.

Duly noted

MARQUETTE PLANS INCH FORWARD. Eric Reaves reports that meetings with contractors are being held concerning the renovation of the Pavilion and the landscaping around Fr. Marquette's statue. The contracts are designed to facilitate bids by smaller Gary firms, and to include minority workers, women and Gary residents to do the work. Meanwhile, plans for the Aquatorium have been approved by the city and work can begin once funds are released by the Regional Development Authority (RDA).

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING OF THE MILLER CITIZENS CORP. WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 14, AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE MARQUETTE PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON GRAND BLVD. Members are invited to attend and participate.

Contact the MCC between meetings at P.O.Box 2645, Gary, IN 46403, or call 938-8831 or e-mail mcceaton@aol.com. You can also visit the MCC website at www.millercitizenscorp.org.

DANCING AT THE TEMPLE. Temple Israel presents an evening of music and dancing with Greta Pope and DJ Eric Tallackson on Saturday, April 2 beginning at 7:00 pm. Admission is \$20 in advance or \$25 at the door, and includes entertainment, dancing, and homemade appetizers. There will also be a cash bar. Make a reservation by sending your check to Temple Israel, 601 Montgomery St., Gary, IN 46403. For more information, call 938-5232.

TALK THEATER RETURNS. The Aquatorium will host another episode of Talk Theater on **Sunday, March 13 at 3:00 pm.** "Eastern Medicine in the Eastern Wing" will present Acupuncturist Rebecca Sasak, Qigong Practitioner David Cowan, and Yoga Instructor Ruth Best who will describe their disciplines, practice on lucky volunteers, and answer questions from the audience. The cost of \$10 includes cookies and punch.

RENT THE AQUATORIUM. The Aquatorium is already rented for almost all the Saturdays in the summer of 2011, so call Jan at 938-1986 to reserve the remaining dates in 2011 and 2012.

LIBRARY FEES INCREASE. The Woodson Library on Lake Street has increased its fee for use of meeting rooms from \$5 to \$15 per occasion. The MCC routinely uses the library for meetings of the Lakeshore Committee, which are held on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm. (In March, that will be the 17th.) Miller residents are welcome to attend the meetings which deal with Marquette Park, the Miller beach and related subjects.

40th ANNIVERSARY. The MCC public relations committee is working on a new logo to represent the Miller Citizens Corp. for the next 40 years. They are also designing a banner to commemorate the anniversary year.

For the city of Gary, financial problems persist

DUAB APPEAL. The MCC opposed Gary's request for property tax "relief" at the January meeting of the Distressed Unit Appeal Board, (DUAB) which is still deliberating whether to give the city \$11 million in added tax income. In the background, the MCC is considering whether to support a resolution by the Miller Improvement Group charging Marc Giaquinta, a member of the Distressed Unit Appeal Board, with conflict of interest, since he is an attorney representing Republic Services, the parent company of Allied Waste, with which Gary has a contract for garbage collection. The resolution also charges that Tim Rushenberg has benefitted from his service on the DUAB by getting a job with SRI, who auctions tax-delinquent properties in Lake County.

SB 105. Ed Charbonneau, from Porter County, has introduced Senate Bill 105, which is very likely to be approved by the Indiana legislature. The bill provides that government units which are unable to meet their financial obligations can declare themselves to be "distressed" or can be designated as "distressed" by the Distressed Unit Appeal

Board. In such a case, an outside manager would be appointed who would take over responsibility for the unit's financial affairs, including contracts and spending but NOT including taxes.

This is not a “bankruptcy bill”, but is aimed at avoiding municipal bankruptcy. Many Gary residents oppose the legislation because they do not want outsiders to control the operation of our city. However, if the city is actually forced to declare bankruptcy, the results would be even worse. The court would place the city in receivership, the city would be unable to borrow money for years in the future, the receiver would have virtually unlimited power over city affairs, and he would get a 10% cut of city finances. To avoid either of these bad results, the city must find a way to operate within the limits of available revenues.

At this point, the MCC has not taken any position on the proposed legislation.

MCC faults Postal Service

On behalf of the Miller community, the MCC is complaining about poor mail delivery in general and especially poor service during harsh winter weather. Some days, mail was not delivered because carriers stayed home from work and their routes were simply not covered. In areas where mail is delivered by truck, carriers were instructed not to get out of the truck to reach mail boxes which were blocked by snow. One irate resident complained because this was used as an excuse even though, on his street, all the mail boxes were accessible. In every season, residents complain about difficulty getting mail on vacation hold and about slow delivery of second-class mail, like the Lakeshore Shopper. Criticisms have been forwarded to postal authorities, including the Postmaster, Gary, IN 46403 and Congressman Visclosky.