

Meet the mayor, August 20

The MCC has joined forces with the Miller Business Association (MBA), the Arts District (MBACD) and the MCF to sponsor a forum for Miller residents with Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson. MCC President Eric Reaves notes that he has wanted to schedule such an event since the Mayor took office in January, and a suitable date has finally been found.

The Mayoral Forum will be held at the Marquette Park Pavilion on Monday, August 20 at 6:00 pm.

The Mayor will discuss her programs, vision and challenges, and will introduce her cabinet. Members of the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions, and refreshments will be served. In the background, architect Bill Latoza will offer guided tours of the pavilion.

This is the chance for Miller residents to hear, at first hand, how the mayor is approaching the challenges of her office. Take advantage of the opportunity!

Duly noted . . .

EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETS. The MCC Education Committee meets every month in the hour before the MCC Board Meeting. This month, that will be at 6:30 pm on Monday, August 13 at the Methodist Church. **Barbara Leek, our local member of the Gary Community School Board, has agreed to attend the meeting and address the committee members.** The Education Committee continues to encourage MCC members to volunteer at Gary schools.

NEW RESTAURANT IN TOWN. Angela's Pantry is opening on August 1, and will offer serious dining in a stylish but relaxed setting, at 6132 Miller Avenue – the former location of Petals. The owner and chef is Angela McCrovitz, who has a widespread reputation as a chef, and was previously associated with the Baker's House in Miller. The restaurant will be open from 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Wednesday through Saturday evenings. Angela is also going to be offering cooking classes and will be doing catering.

CHARTER SCHOOL GROUNDBREAKING. The Charter School of the Dunes was Gary's first charter school when it opened ten years ago, on the grounds of the former national guard armory at the end of Lake Street. The school has survived and is prospering. It is offering classes for grades K through 10, with grades 11 and 12 to be added in the next two years. After years of

effort, the CSOTD has obtained funding to construct a new school building, at the intersection of Old Hobart Road and Rt. 20. The groundbreaking for the new school was set for August 1, and the building will be ready for use in the fall of 2013. Best wishes for the success of this school which has become a Miller institution.

DOUGLAS CENTER ACTIVITIES. The Douglas Center on Lake Street, an outpost of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, is offering special activities on Saturday afternoons at 1:30 during August.

-----**August 4**, the South Shore Dance Alliance will climax six weeks of training in modern dance with a performance of hip-hop, jazz, and other dances.

-----**August 11**, National Lakeshore research coordinator Joy Marburger will discuss how weather is different from climate and things you can do to slow down climate change.

-----**August 18**, a park ranger will demonstrate the art of flint knapping tools and weapons, imitating the American Indians.

LOCAL PRIZE-WINNER. Corey Davis, a Wirt-Emerson student, has won the national title for poetry interpretation at the National Junior Forensic League Tournament in Indianapolis. His program, "A montage of Life", used poetry of Haki Madhubuti, Langston Hughes, and Rudyard Kipling to best more than 100 competitors. Congratulations Corey!

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE MILLER CITIZENS CORP. BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, AUGUST 13, AT 7:30 PM 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 e-mail mceaton@aol.com. You can also visit the MCC website at www.millercitizenscorp.org.

URBAN ESCAPE TO THE DUNES. National Geographic has recommended the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore as Number 7 in their list of "urban escapes". They cite its miles of sandy Lake Michigan beaches, and also its trails "winding through natural habitats of surprising biodiversity". **Think of this as a place to recommend for YOUR friends to visit, and for YOU to check out!**

FARMER'S MARKET CHANGES HOURS. The Miller Beach farmer's market, located on Lake Street

by the South Shore tracks, has changed its hours. It will be in operation every Saturday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Stop by and shop!

Art is popping up--August 11

The latest in the series of **Pop-up Art events on Lake Street is coming up on Saturday evening, August 11 from 6:00 to 10:00 pm.** The work of over 30 artists will be presented with the theme of “Emerging Perspectives”. Works will be on display at the Gardener Center (aka Miller Drugs) and at other venues along the street. The Gardener Center has been transformed into an excellent space for showing artworks.

Authors Linda Simon and Jane Anneson will be on hand to sell and autograph copies of their book, “Miller Beach”, a pictorial history of the Miller area from its beginnings until the 1930s.

There will once again be a wine tasting, this time with proper one-time permits which will make it unnecessary to relocate in the middle of the evening.

Lake Street will be closed to traffic during the Pop-up event, so attendees can check out the various vendors along the street without risk of becoming casualties.

Aquatorium event–August 18

The Regional Development Authority (RDA) has provided the funds to complete the west half of the Marquette Park Aquatorium, as part of the overall park renovation project, but the RDA doesn't provide funds for operation and maintenance of the facility in the future. The Chanutte Aquatorium Society is therefore continuing its fundraising efforts with its 22nd annual event, starting at **7:30 pm on Saturday, August 18.**

The event will feature food from Miller Pizza, Flamingo Pizza, Ono's Pizza and Amore, with wine and beer provided by Kidstuff Playsystems. DJ Mike Sangerman will provide the music for dancing. The annual meeting of the Aquatorium Society will occupy a small place on the agenda.

Ticket prices are \$50, \$75, \$100 or the purchaser's age and they entitle the buyers to be members of the Society, in addition to enjoying the event. To buy or reserve a ticket in advance, stop by 607 S. Lake Street, or call 938-8080.

Copies of the new book “Miller Beach” will be given as a reward to attendees who purchase \$100 tickets.

Authors Linda Simon and Jane Anneson will be on hand to sell and autograph copies of the book.

The event will also mark the unveiling of the bronze plaque memorializing donors to the Aquatorium society.

The Aquatorium has become a popular venue for special events. **It is fully booked for the current summer of 2012, and all Saturday dates are taken for the coming summer of 2013!** If you want to plan a weekend event there, you must act fast and look far ahead.

Property tax developments benefit Miller tax payers

The latest news from the tax front is good for taxpayers, especially in the area north of Oak Avenue, but not so good for the same residents as users of public services like schools, libraries, roads and parks.

George Rogge, the leader of the MCC property tax task force, has been leading the fight for fair taxes for eight years now, since the administration of Governor Joe Kernan. He has been at the forefront of the struggle for reasonable tax rates and accurate market-value assessments, and he has recently been working closely with Lake County Assessor Hank Adams to see that actual assessments and the resulting taxes in Miller are consistent with other areas in the county.

The MCC pioneered the property tax caps, from which local residents are already benefitting. Under the cap, the rate for owner-occupied homes is limited to 1% of assessed value. The Distressed Unit Appeal Board, which enabled the city of Gary to charge a higher rate, has expired, and the payment of past bond issues is nearing an end. From now on, the property tax rate can only be raised if voters approve new bond issues.

THE GOOD NEWS

The MCC has also been fighting for reasonable market-value assessments. This goal has largely been achieved, except for the area north of Oak Avenue, where a hodge-podge of rates left many properties grossly over-valued. For the taxes payable this year and last, some assessments have been adjusted as the result of personal appeals by individual owners, but the overall picture still included many inequities.

2012 is the year for a general reassessment of properties throughout Indiana, and the values established this year will be the basis of taxation for many years to come. Here in Miller, the main source of contention has been the area north of Oak Avenue and

south of Lake Shore Drive alley. For the new assessment, applicable to taxes for 2012 pay 2013, this area has been assigned a single neighborhood code – 2500 – with a land value of \$900 per front foot. The Township Assessor could revise this value up or down with the application of an “adjustment factor”, but, in any case, it forms the basis for land value assessment. Hank Adams assures us that the neighborhood code definition and the base value of land have been approved at the state level and have not been challenged by the local assessor.

Each property owner will soon be receiving a “Form 11”, which reflects the new assessed value for his property. Be sure to review this document carefully. If an owner has reason to believe that the assessment is incorrect, he will have 45 days to file an appeal. If he does not act within that time, he is stuck with whatever value has been assigned to his property. Representatives of the assessor’s office checked out properties in Miller earlier this year, and they may have made changes to the description of buildings which would alter the assessed values, so check carefully.

In the past, jurisdictions were able to apply for an “**excess levy**”, to make up for tax collection shortfalls. This involved billing the property owners who pay their taxes to compensate for those who do not pay. **However, this option has been eliminated.**

THE BAD NEWS

The origin of the property tax crisis was the drastic reduction in assessments for US Steel in Gary and the comparable industries in East Chicago, Whiting and Hammond. This reduction, coupled with tax caps, leaves all government entities in this area short of funds. Recently, the situation has deteriorated further because **the tax court has ruled that Gary’s lakeshore casinos were over-assessed.** As a result, the City of Gary and all the other jurisdictions which share tax revenues are required to repay several million dollars which they have already collected, and they will be getting less tax money from the casinos in the future. The local government units will continue to have greatly reduced funds to carry out their functions. Gary is already behind in paying bills and may have trouble selling tax anticipation bonds, to fund operations while we wait for tax payments to come in.