

Marquette Park saga goes on

Late in September, the MCC wrote a letter to Mayor Freeman-Wilson, highlighting maintenance problems at the renovated Marquette Park and suggesting that the city does not have the funds to carry out the management plan which has been proposed. Early in October, an MCC delegation met with the Mayor to discuss the park maintenance problems. To their surprise, the Mayor appeared to accept the idea of a park management organization, which would raise money for the park and would largely control its operation. The MCC and the city would each appoint a committee to discuss the terms for such an arrangement.

The MCC put together a team which included Eric Reaves (MCC president), George Rogge (Miller leader and long-time Park Board president), Carol Smith (MCC Shoreline Committee chairman), and Tom Cera (former US Steel executive). We also sent the mayor examples of park support agreements in other places. However, by mid- November the Mayor had not named the persons who would represent the City in discussions about park management.

Finally, the MCC received a message from the Mayor, who indicated that she had discussed the subject with her staff and she now feels she needs a support agreement which would cover all the city's major parks. She also thinks she should not make "a unilateral decision to choose the MCC as the entity to represent the interests of Miller citizens relative to Marquette Park." Instead, the city will "issue a notice to the general public for all jewel parks at a minimum."

Following this announcement, the MCC is still considering what, if anything, to do next.

Duly noted . . .

HOLIDAY SING-ALONG. The Lake Street Gallery will present the **21st annual Holiday Sing-along**, with Kaye Lewis at the organ accompanying the attendees in the whole repertoire of popular holiday songs. **Saturday, December 7 from 7:00 to 10:00 pm.** Refreshments, including Joyce's renowned chili, will add to the festivities. The **Lake Street Gallery** will be open every day, with extended hours, from November 30 until Christmas. Starting November 30, there will be '**Soupy Saturday**' every week, with a bowl of soup for each customer, to keep their strength up while shopping. For the Arts District's **Pop-up Bazaar on December 14**, the

Gallery will feature works by Therese Carey and Deanna Piskor.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR – DEC. 7 & 8. St. Mary of the Lake Church will hold its annual Christmas Bazaar on **Saturday, December 7 and Sunday, December 8 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.** On sale are all manner of merchandise, books, handicraft items, and plants. For lunch, enjoy a variety of soups, sandwiches and sweets.

MBACD HOLIDAY BAZAAR. As their December pop-up event, the Miller Beach Arts District is presenting a **one-day bazaar** featuring fine arts and crafts, home and garden wares, music and food from a variety of local sources, and pictures with Santa, at **the Gardner Center on Lake Street, from 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm on Saturday, December 14.** There will be live Christmas music from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. (There is still time for additional vendors to apply on-line at www.millerbeacharts.org.)

A PETE SEEGER EVENING. The Miller Beach Arts District will host an **evening** devoted to the memory of the legendary singer, Pete Seeger. The presentation will include a film, **“Pete Seeger – the Power of Song”**, with a commentary by Ron Cohen, who will also be signing his book, *The Pete Seeger Reader* – a collection of writings by and about Seeger. There will also be a display of Pete Seeger memorabilia. The event will take place at the Gardner Center, 540 S. Lake St., on **Friday, December 6 beginning at 7:00 pm.** Admission is \$12.

MEN AND BOYS. “Big Joe” Petras is sponsoring the twenty-third annual **Men and Boys Holiday Benefit Brunch on Saturday, December 21 from noon until 2:00 pm. at Miller Pizza, 622 South Lake Street.** The donation is \$10 per person, for the benefit of the Marquette Kids Park, but kids who use the park are free. Donations are welcome, even from those who cannot attend. Make checks payable to “Marquette Park Playground Committee, Inc.” and send to Big Joe Petras, 1220 N. Vermillion St, Gary, IN 46403. For additional information, contact Petras at 938-8808. Over the years, this event has raised more than \$7,000 for the kids’ park, to pay for maintenance and new equipment.

A JAZZY NUTCRACKER. The South Shore Dance Alliance, along with the Gary Community Schools, will present **Cirque du Jazz – A Nutcracker Tale** on **Friday and Saturday, December 20 and 21 at 7:00 pm and Sunday, December 22 at 3:00 pm, at the Wirt-Emerson auditorium** on Grand Blvd. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$8 for children. The show is described as “the holiday classic with a jazzy new twist.” It features a mix of classical Tchaikovsky and Duke Ellington jazz.

BAKER'S HOUSE RETURNS. Angela McCravitz has been back as the chef at the Baker's House on Miller Avenue for several months, but there has been confusion about their hours of operation. They are now **open daily from 7:00 am to 2:00 pm**, serving breakfast and lunch – pastries, eggs, sandwiches, coffee and tea in pleasant and homey surroundings. Try them out!

DECEMBER 2013 MCC MEETING

THE NEXT MCC BOARD MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 9 AT 7:30 PM, IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE MARQUETTE PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON GRAND BLVD.

MCC 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.

MCC DANCE. An MCC committee is trying to develop plans for a Valentine's Day dance, this coming February, to continue the tradition of annual celebrations which lasted 32 years, before it was interrupted by the renovation of the Marquette Park Pavilion in 2012. The challenge is to put together a package – location, food, drinks, band – which would be attractive to Miller residents and affordable. If the committee is able to develop a package they think will sell, we'll be letting you know VERY SOON.

GARDENING 101. Members of the Miller Garden Club hear frequently from people who have tried to start a garden “but everything they plant dies.” To help these aspiring gardeners prepare to try again in the spring, the Garden Club is presenting a class in the basics of gardening – how to make plants thrive. The session will be held at the **Aquatorium** in Marquette Park on **Saturday, January 11 from 9:00 am to noon**. There is no charge for attendance – just put it on your calendar and show up.

BEAD TOWN NORTHWEST INDIANA. Between January 3 and February 15, 2014, the Gardner Center on Lake Street will host “Bead Town Northwest

Indiana – Where art and magic collide”. New Orleans artist Stephan Wanger, with support from the Methodist Hospitals Foundation and its various partners, will create mosaic “canvasses” depicting the Calumet region, using discarded Mardi Gras beads as his materials.

MCC by-law changes adopted

At the November MCC board meeting, the directors approved a number of changes to the MCC by-laws. Some of these were minor alterations, clarifying procedures for electing and replacing board members. There were, however, several more significant changes:

-----No elected public official may serve as a voting member of the MCC Board of Directors. However, non-voting seats are reserved for the Mayor of Gary, the First-District Councilman, and at-large city councilmen, if they want to attend and participate in discussions.

-----The number of MCC directors will be reduced from 30 to 20, in a two-step process beginning in 2014. Starting at that time, 10 board members, rather than 15, will be chosen to two-year terms each year, so by 2016 the number of directors will be down to 20. The committee members proposing changes to the by-laws felt this would create a more manageable governing board and would give all the members more opportunity to participate in discussions. The committee also hoped that the smaller number of directors would be more involved in MCC activities.

Meanwhile, the current thirty-member board of directors has been filled out by the election of **Brian DeFries** of Lake Shore Drive, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Doretha Rouse, who has served capably as an MCC director for a number of years, but is now the First District representative on the Gary Community School Board. Since the school board meets at the same time as the monthly MCC board meetings, Rouse isn't able to attend the MCC meetings.

MCC promotes education

The MCC Education Committee, with leadership from Jason Arndt, is moving ahead on two proposals:

-----The MCC wants to fund one or two \$1,000 scholarships for deserving high school graduates, to help them continue with college studies. They have currently applied to the Miller Community Fund to help finance the scholarships.

-----The Gary Community Schools have changed their policy and are allowing high school freshmen and

sophomores to enroll at classes at the Gary Career Center, to develop practical workplace skills. The MCC Education Committee has been advocating this change for some time. Now, they see a need to lobby the administrations at Roosevelt and Wallace High Schools, to take advantage of this rule change. So far, these schools haven't sent any underclassmen to participate in the program.

In the background

ILLIANA EXPRESSWAY. As reported last month, the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) has been collecting comments on the proposed Illiana Expressway, which would link I-65 in the vicinity of Lowell with I-55 in the vicinity of Peotone, IL. George Rogge, representing the Miller Business Association, and Tom Eaton, as a private citizen with ties to the MCC, submitted comments opposing construction of the expressway. They argued that the new road would help to promote the proposed Peotone airport in competition with the Gary airport, would encourage more urban sprawl, and would detract from the stated long-range goal of renewing the older Lake County cities which have lost population and have large numbers of vacant properties. After collecting a variety of comments, the NIRPC staff members made no recommendation, but left to the full NIRPC board the decision to support the project or not. Note that the NIRPC decision is critical to the Illiana project. **If NIRPC does not include the expressway in its long-range plan it will not be built.**

TEARING DOWN EYESORES. The Miller Business Association has developed a priority list of 15 or 20 abandoned buildings in the Lake Street corridor which should be torn down. They have found helpers who will handle, at a reduced rate, the title searches and other legal paperwork necessary to earmark buildings for demolition. Once this paper work is completed, it will then be necessary to work with the City of Gary, to find money for the actual demolition.