

RETTMAN'S RAMSEY REPORT
August, September - 2003

JANICE RETTMAN
County Commissioner
District 3

220 City Hall / Courthouse
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102
Fax 266-8370, Phone 266-8360

Dear District 3 Resident:

I hope this letter provides you with information on some of the issues being discussed by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. The views expressed in this newsletter are mine and/or my staff's and are provided to citizens as a part of my responsibility to keep you informed on what I am doing as your County Commissioner. If I, or my staff, can be of assistance to you please call us at **266-8360** or send an e-mail to www.janice.rettman@co.ramsey.mn.us.

Sincerely, **Janice**

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[NEW DETENTION CENTER PREPARES FOR OPENING](#)

That building under construction at Lafayette and Grove Streets near Downtown Saint Paul is Ramsey County's new Law Enforcement Center (LEC) – otherwise known as "the jail". The new facility will be completed on schedule and within its \$47 million budget. It encompasses 275,000 square feet but the "detention" portion of the facility could be expanded to double the inmate housing to 828 beds. The new facility includes:

- A sally port, which is a secured area where prisoners are dropped off for booking;

- A booking area where those arrested are booked, fingerprinted, questioned and personal belongings collected and stored;
- Housing facilities for 414 individuals with one or two beds in the 276 cells;
- Food service for inmates;
- A medical unit to treat minor injuries and health problems saving trips to the hospital;
- Two courtrooms;
- Judges' chambers and court administration space;
- A 24-hour lobby/visiting area;
- Offices for the Sheriff's administration including locker rooms and workout facilities for deputies;
- Expansion space for additional courtrooms.

In case you were wondering, the new inmate facilities, with their cement walls and stainless steel beds and lavatory fixtures, are not luxurious by anyone's standards. The thought of being locked in a 150 square foot space with little to do but wait should be reason enough to try to stay out. No matter how you look at the new facility, it is still a jail.

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NEW NAME FOR COMMUNITY CLINICS by Mary Thoenke

In June, Commissioner Janice Rettman and her assistant, Mary Thoenke, participated in the name unveiling ceremony for two of Saint Paul's long-time community clinics: Model Cities Health Center in the Midway area and North End Health Center located in the North End/South Como neighborhoods. The clinics, which are partially funded by Ramsey County, had operated independently for many years but recently merged into one entity. The new name for both locations is Open Cities Health Center.

Model Cities Health Center (MCHC) started as an all-volunteer health clinic in the basement of a church in Saint Paul's Summit-University neighborhood in 1968 as part of then President Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities Program. Early leaders included Mary Stokes, a nurse, and Mrs. Timothy O. Vann who later served on the board of Directors for Group Health, Inc. and Health Partners. Both women served as executive directors of the clinic that grew under their guidance to become one of the leading community clinics in the Twin Cities, providing health care to all people through all life cycles.

The North End Health Center (NEHC) was founded in 1973 when area church and community leaders recognized that the North End was lacking in basic, affordable health care services for its people. Community leaders involved in the formation of the clinic included George Bohl, Jerry Palmer, Tony Buchal, Father Vernon Miller, Sister Jeanne Therese and Sister Vivian Kovar. Low income, uninsured, under-insured and high-risk individuals unable to access the traditional health care system because of language, culture, education level or lifestyle are the focus of NEHC's services. The clinic is known for its

quality care delivered in a helpful, respectful manner. North End also serves private-pay patients.

Today Open Cities Health Center is one of the largest community clinics in the Twin Cities. Open Cities provides primary and preventive health care and related services to people throughout the Twin Cities. Services and staff are multi-cultural and translators are available to assist in doctor/patient communication. The clinic sees all patients regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay, and in 2002 recorded over 65,000 patient visits.

The new "Open Cities" name was chosen to create a universal image and make both clinics more recognizable to the people and communities they serve. Open Cities is located at 409 North Dunlap, next to the Central Medical Building just off of University Avenue. Open Cities North End is at 135 Manitoba Avenue at Rice Street.

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VASKO REQUESTS EXPANSION OF COMO SITE By Linda Jungwirth

The Vasko Solid Waste Management/ Recycling facility, located at 309 Como Avenue, has applied to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to expand its operations in order to accept more waste. The facility, originally permitted by the MPCA on September 12, 2000, is licensed by the city of Saint Paul as a transfer station. It also has a solid waste transfer station license and a hazardous waste license issued by Ramsey County. The original permit authorized a combined maximum of 156,000 tons per year of mixed municipal solid waste (MSW) and construction/demolition waste (C&D), of which only 96,300 could be MSW. The original permit also authorizes the

transfer of a combined maximum of 500 tons per day of which a minimum of 300 tons per day needed to be MSW. This permit was modified in 2002 to allow an increase to a combined maximum of 600 tons per day of which no more than 400 tons could be MSW.

Under the new request, there would be no modifications to the structures on the site, only an expansion of the permit limits, that is, the amount of waste the facility can accept. If issued as requested, Vasko's transfer station could accept a combined maximum of 218,400 tons per year of MSW and C&D. The MSW portion could not exceed 171,850 tons per year. The daily capacity of the facility would increase from 600 tons per day to 700 tons. The modified permit would allow the daily capacity to be comprised of any combination of waste.

An environmental assessment by the MPCA concludes that an expansion of capacity could result in 80 more vehicle trips per day on Como Avenue including 56 garbage trucks and 10 semi-trailers. No mention was made of trucks using adjacent neighborhood streets to access the facility. Ramsey County staff inspects the facility 8 times per year for compliance with County ordinances and the adopted MPCA rules. The MPCA occasionally inspects the facility also.

The MPCA has given preliminary approval for the modification and has issued a notice to gather public comment on it. Notice and other information is available on the MPCA's website at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/news/data/index/cfm?pn=1>

At Commissioner Janice Rettman's request, Ramsey County received an extension of the public comment period. The MPCA had initially mailed notice to property owners within ¼ mile of the site. Commissioner Rettman argued that this was not sufficient notice since none of the district planning councils had been notified and because many of the area residents are actually renters who did not see the request for comments. Armed with the County's fact sheet on the proposal the Commissioner personally door knocked or delivered notice to every home and business in the affected area in addition to the district council. Janice was very concerned that those most affected by the facility were not being notified about their opportunity for comment on the new proposal.

Issues of concern that were conveyed to the Commissioner, plus her personal observations, include odor and traffic. The odor can already be characterized as "ripe", even at a distance. In response, a stipulation in the agreement could require that waste be removed in a timely fashion or some other control be implemented. As far as traffic is concerned, neighbors have already noticed an increase in truck traffic without doubling the capacity. This increase is often on local streets and has been appearing as early as 3:30 A.M., which is not appropriate. In addition to concerns about safety and congestion, questions were raised about the roadway's ability to withstand the constant pounding, as well as who should pay to have streets repaired.

Finally, if a sufficient number of people request it, the MPCA may conduct a public informational meeting about the permit. A contested case hearing, which is a more formal legal proceeding, could also be conducted by the agency if that is requested. For its part, the City of Saint Paul will not require any further action because the licensing and zoning are correct. However, the Ramsey County licenses for the transfer station and hazardous waste collection would need to be modified to address concerns.

In regard to the notification oversight, **Commissioner Rettman** stated that "regardless of the outcome, decisions like this cannot be made in a vacuum. The bureaucracy needs to understand that facilities like this impact the daily lives of the people who live nearby so they need to take whatever steps are necessary to make sure residents have a voice, whether they are homeowners or renters, rich or poor, well-educated or otherwise."

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STATE CUTS CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE COUNTY SPENDING

One of the functions of Minnesota's 87 counties is to provide services for the state. These services generally focus on meeting basic human needs such as public safety, public health, child protection, mental health and family welfare. In the early years of the state, most counties had "welfare boards" made up of citizens who saw to it that families in trouble received some help to get them through tough times. The services could be provided

through county tax dollars but were more likely contributed by churches or neighbors. Regardless of where help came from, the goal was to make certain that families stayed together and children's needs were met. However, orphanages, both public and private, were very common as a means to see that children could eat and attend school while parents struggled to survive on their own.

As the state grew and conditions changed it became clear that there was a need for uniformity in services. It also became clear that many counties were not prepared to provide specialized mental health care or other special needs. In time the federal government became more involved by providing funding with strings attached, such as Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty in the 1960's.

Fast forward to the 21st century where a slow economy and state budget deficits have caused us to re-think the services that should be provided, at what level and to whom. As a result of changes in mandates and programs that occurred during the last legislative session, Minnesota counties, including Ramsey, will be cutting some existing programs, reducing funding for others and adding new requirements for participants. All of these changes are aimed at making social programs temporary and directed toward building the living skills necessary for everyone to succeed.

These changes will mean a new look in 2004, new program goals and fewer services for people in need. The down side is that agencies that provide services will need to look for other sources for funding, re-think their programs or reduce staffing. Additionally, there will be limited resources for those who have not sought help before but need it now. The upside for county property owners is that a tax increase cannot be instituted to make up for the lost revenue.

Finally, as the County Board considers these changes **Commissioner Janice Rettman** will be watching other counties to make sure that there is equity and fairness.

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LOCAL ELECTIONS DRAW A CROWD by Mark Voerding

Many local elections are being held this fall as cities and school districts attempt to deal with budget shortfalls. In Saint Paul, all 7 city council seats are up for election while the Mayor is in mid-term. In Wards 1 and 2 incumbents Jerry Blakey and Chris Coleman are not running so those races will be especially interesting. In Ward 1 there are 9 candidates vying for the part-time seat, 7 have filed in Ward 2 and 4 candidates in Wards 4 and 5.

The primary election is set for September 9 and the general election is November 4. Election judges are needed so call 266-2171 for information.

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[COMMISSIONER PROPOSES HRA LEVY COMPROMISE](#)

Even though she is known as a fiscal conservative, Commissioner Janice Rettman proposed a small property tax levy to help suburban communities meet their housing goals. During the last legislative session a multi-city HRA levy was proposed by a number of Ramsey County communities to support housing needs. However, many of the smaller cities were left out of both the funding plan and the decision making.

Under the new plan, every city in the County would receive some support and would make all decisions regarding expenditures. State law dictates exactly how funds may be spent within a broad public purpose framework. Under the proposal Cities would receive an annual allocation based on population as follows:

0 to 5,000	- \$25,000
5,000 to 10,000	- \$35,000
10,000 to 15,000	- \$45,000
15,000 to 30,000	- \$55,000
30,000 to 50,000	- \$75,000

Saint Paul, the only Ramsey County city over 50,000, has its own HRA tax levy

Over the next two months local cities will be reviewing the proposal and making recommendations to the County Board. If there is broad support, the County Board will likely approve the plan as part of its 2004 budget process.

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