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Miller Message for March 2015

Meet the candidates for First District City Council seat

Local primary elections are coming up on **Tuesday, May 5, 2015**, and dozens of candidates will be competing for administrative and legislative posts. To give local residents a chance to check out the candidates, the Miller Citizens Corp. and the Miller Business Association are jointly sponsoring a debate by the candidates for the **First District seat on the Gary Common Council**. The event will take place on **Tuesday, March 10 at 6:00 pm at Temple Israel, 601 N. Montgomery St.** Participants will be candidates Jackie Lee, Mildred Shannon (the incumbent councilwoman), Herb Smith, Eric Reaves, and Rebecca Wyatt. Moderators for the debate will be Bill Dolan from the NWI Times and Michelle Quinn from the Post Tribune.

Questions for the candidates may be submitted prior to the debate by clicking CONTACT on the website www.millerbusinessassociation.com. In addition, cards and pencils will be provided for submitting additional questions at the debate. If you have questions about arrangements for the debate, contact George Rogge by e-mail at georgerogge88@gmail.com.

Other offices which will be contested in the May primary include the Mayor, the City Clerk, the City Judge, and the three at-large seats on the Common Council.

Gary Community Schools ask for property tax rise

Not long ago, the State of Indiana enacted an increase in the sales tax to replace local property taxes as the source of funds for the public schools. The deal was that the state would take on the whole burden of financing primary and secondary school operations. Now, a number of school districts, including the Gary Community Schools, are telling voters that this arrangement does not provide them with sufficient funds to operate, either because the state does not allocate enough money for the schools or because the school districts do not operate efficiently or both.

The Gary Community Schools are sponsoring a referendum which will appear on the May 5 ballot, asking voters to approve an increase in property taxes for a **period of 7 years**, beginning with taxes payable in 2016; at a **rate not to exceed .41% of the net assessed valuation**; for the purpose of **funding teaching positions, staff positions, and educational programming**. If it passes, this tax will be an addition to all other property taxes and will be on top of the 1%-2%-3% tax caps.

The additional tax will be based on assessed values for 2015, which will not be known until tax bills are sent out later in the year. However, you can estimate the additional amount you will be asked to approve based on the assessment for 2014, if you have a copy of last year's tax bill or can reference the Lake County website on the internet. **(Go to lakecountyin.org > Treasurer > Tax Search > OK > Start Search > enter name + GO > click on property code > view tax record. Line 3 is the net assessed value of the property. Multiply this by .0041 to get the amount of tax increase you will be voting to pay or not to pay).**

Since the tax will be based on the NET assessed value, after all deductions, it will be less onerous for owner-occupied homes than for rental properties, empty lots, and businesses for which there are no deductions. **The MCC tax committee warns that the tax will have a negative effect on struggling local businesses and on redevelopment efforts aimed at attracting new businesses.**

Although the referendum indicates the new tax money would be used for operating expenses, the rumor is that the real need for additional funds is to pay a large debt the school city owes the federal government for payroll taxes and large contributions owed to the employee retirement funds.

Rockin' Sockin' Dance Party

The Gary Rotary Club and the Miller Business Association (MBA) are throwing a **Rockin' Sockin' Dance Party** at the Gardner Center, 540 S. Lake St. on **Saturday, March 21 from 7:00 to 11:00 pm**. The event features music by the popular **CRAWPUPPIES**, along with complimentary beer and food. The cost is \$35

per person in advance, \$40 at the door. Tickets are available at the Lake Street Gallery and Ayers Realtors, as well as online at www.eventbrite.com. There will also be a silent auction, so come prepared to bid. Proceeds will go to the Rotary Club's Helping Hands project for Gary school teachers and to the MBA Miller Community Fund to assist local not-for-profit organizations. For additional information, call Joyce Davis at 938-4566

Duly noted . . .

PET ROCK 2015 EVENT. The Humane Society of Northwest Indiana, located in Miller on Rt. 20, is holding a major fundraising event at the County Line Orchard in Hobart on **Saturday, March 28 from 6:00 to 11:00 pm**. Entertainment will include music by the Bluz Brothers and the Acoustic Crawpuppies, along with comedians Rudy Ruiz and Marci Deloney . There will be a silent auction with major items being offered. Tickets are \$50 VIP, \$20 General Admission, and \$10 children, and may be purchased at the door or through www.eventbrite.com. For more information, call 219-938-3339.

LITTLE LEAGUE SIGN-UP. The Miller Little League is accepting applications for the 2015 baseball season every **Saturday in March from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm** at the Gardner Center, 540 S. Lake Street. Any players age 4 to 18 who live or attend school in the Miller, Aetna or Glen Ryan neighborhoods of Gary are eligible to sign up. For more information, stop by the registration or call Tracy Brough at 938-5253.

MARCH 2015 MCC MEETING

THE NEXT MCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 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.

CRISIS CENTER CLASS. The Crisis Center at 101 N. Montgomery St in Miller has been established

for many years, with the mission of helping adolescents (age 12 to 18) with mental health problems and addictions. On **Saturday, March 14, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm**, they will be offering a class in Youth Mental Health First Aid, which will teach how to recognize, assess and help young people with mental health issues. The training will be directed toward family members, school staff, and other caring citizens who deal with young people in crisis. To sign up for a class or to obtain further information, contact Sara Spruth at 938-2708 or by e-mail to sspruth@crisiscenterysb.org.

DON'T FORGET The Douglas Center on Lake Street, operated by the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, remains open every **Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm**, with a variety of activities geared primarily for children. When there is sufficient snow on the ground, they lend out cross-country skis and snow shoes without charge.

GARY-SOUTH SHORE AIR SHOW. The South Shore Air Show is scheduled to make a return to the Miller lakefront on the weekend of July 10, 11 and 12. The show will be organized entirely by the city of Gary, with no involvement by Speros Batistatos and the South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority. According to knowledgeable sources, the Gary-Chicago Airport is all set to handle the aviation part of the show, as it has done many times in the past. However, at this point, the city does not appear to have any plan for activities in Marquette Park to attract and accommodate thousands of visitors, including transportation; parking; vendors of food, drinks and merchandise; security; and a multitude of other details.

Shoreline committee revs up

Following a brief winter hiatus, the MCC Shoreline Committee is back in action. Committee chairman Carol Smith has again scheduled regular monthly committee meetings for the **third Thursday of the month** at the Gardner Center, 540 S. Lake Street. The next meetings will be on **Thursday, March 19, at 10:00 am and 6:00 pm**, and persons who wish to attend can choose which session is more convenient. The annual community meeting with law enforcement and park department representatives will be scheduled for **Thursday, April 16 at 6:00 pm**.

Park Superintendent Lori Latham reports that this summer, the six beach patrol officers riding ATVs will be contract employees of the Park Department. Employees assigned to beach cleanup will be scheduled Wednesday through Sunday and there will be just one full-time maintenance supervisor for Marquette Park.

This means that volunteers will again be needed to clean up trash and to help with planting and weed control. In addition to cleanup of the park in general, the kids' playground area has been divided into 20 small plots to be 'adopted' by volunteers, who will agree to keep them weeded and free of unwanted growth, starting with a work day in April to uproot emerging sticker plants before they become a nuisance. If you can help with these maintenance efforts, attend one of the committee meetings and volunteer, or contact Carol Smith at 938-4225 or by e-mail to pandcsmith@comcast.net.

REFRESHMENTS IN THE PARK. Carmella Saraceno has again been awarded the contract to operate the concession stand at the east end of Marquette Park, near Montgomery St. **Carmella's Café** will be open daily during the summer season, serving coffee and rolls for breakfast, hot dogs and snacks during the day, for the benefit of beach-goers and passers-by.

PAVILION CATERING. The Marquette Park Pavilion has contracted with a new caterer, following a long period of unsatisfactory dining experiences at what should be a prime entertainment venue. The new caterer is **Angela McCravitz**, who demonstrated at Angela's Pantry her ability to fashion interesting and tasty dishes. She will now have the luxury of a real kitchen to work in.

FIRST FRIDAY MOVIES. The parking lot at Marquette Park will be transformed into a drive-in theater the first Friday of each month, beginning on May 1. A line-up of movies, to be announced, will start at dusk.

OPEN MIC NIGHT. The second Friday of each month will be Open Mic Night at the Marquette Park pavilion. Tickets will be \$15, including snacks.

Spring art exhibits planned

The Miller Beach Arts and Creative District (MBACD) will present a new exhibit, **Art from Excess**, at the Gardner Center, 540 S. Lake Street, beginning on **Sunday, March 22 and lasting until Sunday, April 5**, with an opening and discussion with the artist on **Saturday, March 28 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm**.

Other events are planned throughout the spring:

April 17 - Lighthouse Charter School silent auction

April 24 through May 10 - **Rashelle Roos and Joe Agati** art exhibit'

May 22 through June 14 - **Graffiti extravaganza** with exhibits, workshops, shows
and the closing ceremony on June 13, probably with a

pop-up art display, bands, and other street activities.

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