

Valentine's Dance cancelled

For 31 years, the annual Valentine's Day Dance was the MCC's signature event, which many local residents and former residents looked forward to as a chance to celebrate and socialize in the middle of winter. We eagerly awaited the completion of the Pavilion renovation project so we could resume the dance tradition. It was therefore a cause of anguish and outrage when we were forced to cancel the dance for this year.

The decision was influenced by the substantial loss the MCC suffered on the October Masquerade Ball. At this point, the organization cannot afford to sponsor another losing event. However, **the primary reason for the cancellation was the inability to find any MCC board member who was willing to be the chairman of the dance committee.** Members of the Executive Committee canvassed all the current board members, and none of them was willing to take on the task of organizing the dance. As a result, time marched on and when we arrived at December, 2012, without an organization or a plan for the dance, there was no way we could make it happen. We did not even know what the costs of the dance would be and how they would be distributed.

During 2013, the MCC will try to devise a plan for a future dance and recruit a team to carry it out. In the meantime, we are considering once again a summer activity which could attract a larger segment of Miller residents. **Your ideas for such an event are welcome.**

Revised Masquerade Ball costs

Following the publication of the December Miller Message, the Marquette Park Pavilion provided a revised explanation of their bill for the October Masquerade Ball. As previously reported, expenses included \$6,059 to the Pavilion, \$5,474.38 to the caterers, and \$2,217.66 for MCC expenses – entertainment, decoration and publicity. Originally, the payment to the pavilion was described as pavilion rental (\$4,343.00) and bar (\$1,726.00) Our later information ends up with the same total cost, but breaks it town into:

Facility rental	\$ 935.00
Security	250.00
Liquor	
Premium bar (\$24 per person)	3,600.00
Additional hour (\$7 per person)	1,050.00
Total	\$6,059.00

It didn't change what we had to pay, but the MCC objected to the extra cost of \$1,050 for keeping the bar open

for 5 hours rather than 3. We thought that operating the bar for 5 hours at a 5-hour event should have been standard. We also thought the facility rental price was out of line with the cost of other facilities in the Region, and many people are concerned that the Pavilion has priced itself out of the market.

As an example, the Wirt class of 1973 is planning a reunion at the Pavilion this summer, and the cost for tickets is \$100 per person. Is that a price people can afford?

Duly noted . . .

TRIVIA NIGHT. Temple Israel presents its fifth annual Trivia Night on Saturday, January 26, starting at 6:30. Gather your team, or take a chance and come on your own. The entry fee is \$20 per individual, \$120 for a table of eight or \$150 for a table of ten. There will be a silent auction, and food and drinks for sale. Earn one point per person with donations of canned goods or cash for local food pantries. Reserve your table or seat with a check to Temple Israel, 601 Montgomery St. Call 743-0624, or e-mail rich7310@comcast.net for more information.

A WINTER SOCIAL. St. Barnabas in the Dunes will hold a **Soup and Salad Fundraiser** for the benefit of local schools and the community, on **Saturday, January 26 from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm**. The cost is \$5 and customers can choose to eat in or carry out. For further information, call 938-2834.

GARDEN CLUB SPECIAL. **Everyone is invited** to a special mid-winter event, sponsored by the **Miller Garden Club on Saturday, January 19 at the Aquatorium in Marquette Park**. Beth Botts, a writer and gardener “who knows what’s going on under ground when the snow covers our gardens,” will discuss “**The Garden In Winter**” -- what you can do to benefit your garden even when it is sleeping. The program will begin with a social hour at 6:00 pm, followed by Botts’ presentation at 7:00. For more information, call 938-8532.

BAKERY CAFÉ REVIVED. It was a shock to the Miller community when the Miller Bakery Café closed two years ago. Since then, the building has been vacant and former owner Gary Sanders has resisted opportunities to sell it. Eventually, the property was repossessed by the bank, and it has now been purchased by Jack Strode, who has extensive experience in Chicago “fine dining”

restaurants, and Diana Twyman, a Miller resident. They are currently making significant infrastructure repairs and upgrades to the building. They are also waiting to obtain a liquor license, but they hope to be opening the restaurant soon.

ALWAYS OPEN. The 444 Grill on Lake Street has announced its winter hours, from 3:00 pm to 10:00 pm every day. For information or reservations, call 219-427-0145.

JANUARY MCC MEETING

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE MILLER CITIZENS CORP. BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 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.

DECORATING MILLER. In keeping with tradition, members of the **Miller Garden Club** decorated the South Shore station, the library, the Aquatorium and the welcome to Miller signs to celebrate the holiday season. They were aided by Roger Hayworth and his community service crew who decorated the light poles on Lake Street. Thanks to all these public-spirited neighbors for helping to make this a festive time of year.

MEN AND BOYS UPDATE. For many years, Joe Petras has been promoting a pre-Christmas lunch to raise funds for the Marquette Kids Park. This year's events, on December 15 and December 24, raised a total of \$929. Participants enjoyed pizza at Miller Pizza and sandwiches at Armans while contributing to this worthy cause.

INCOME TAX DEBATE. The proposal for a Lake County income tax is still under discussion, and the proposal is supported by officials from the north Lake cities and by some county council members. The state has also applied pressure in favor of the income tax by freezing spending of all Lake County municipalities so long as the county does not adopt the tax. On the good side, state laws assure that the income tax money would be distributed based on population and would be used for specific purposes: law enforcement and to compensate

for unpaid property taxes. The subject will be discussed further at the MCC January meeting.

MARQUETTE PROJECT ENDING. The years-long renovation of Marquette Park is finally winding down. The new street lights are in place but have not yet been turned on. Otherwise, the location of the rubbish collection station at the east end of the park is one of the few remaining issues. All autos entering the park must pass by the intersection of Montgomery St. and Oak Ave., where the first glimpse of the park will be trash. Mayor Freeman-Wilson is considering four options for improving this first view of the park, ranging in cost from \$1,734 to hide the structure behind shrubbery to \$85,000 to remove and rebuild the structure in a better place. The mayor has not yet decided the issue, which creates a fifth option – to do nothing.

Economic development proposed

Miller has been presented with several **economic development options**, which will be on the table for **discussion and, perhaps, action** in the coming months. These include the area of the South Shore Station at Lake Street; the area at the north end of Lake Street, next to the beach; and the north side of Rt. 20 around the Rt. 51 Plaza. These are all among the ten “development areas” recognized by the Gary Economic Development Corp., the private not-for-profit agency closely tied to City planners.

SOUTH SHORE STATION

The location of the Miller South Shore stop is still an issue, with the MCC and other Miller groups strongly favoring the present Lake St. location. The Mayor has apparently decided against the relocation of the station to the end of I-65, but wants a study commission to evaluate alternative locations between Clay St. and Lake St. The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), which operates the railroad, still wants just one stop in Gary, possibly at Clay St. Other players in the game include the Regional Development Authority (RDA), the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Corp. (NIRPC), and the federal Department of Transportation (DOT). The RDA and NICTD are already conducting a review of all the South Shore stations.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Against this background, the planning committee of the Miller Arts District has presented to the Mayor a proposal for a Transit-Oriented Development District (TOD), centered on Lake Street and stretching from 15th Ave. to the lake. This would include two development areas. **At Lake Street, there would be a new South Shore station**

with raised platforms, and surrounding construction to include high-rise market-rate housing, a medium-size food store, other retail business spaces, and (free or cheap) parking for 700 cars. Benefits would include immediate jobs in construction and continuing jobs in new businesses.

LAKE STREET BEACH RESORT

At the beach end of Lake Street, the Charter School of the Dunes is vacating the one-time Naval Reserve facility, which would be replaced by a lodge and resort, in cooperation with the National Lakeshore. This would include a hotel with 150 rooms and two restaurants. There could be an agreement for sharing revenue with adjacent Marquette Park.

For both of these developments, the city would issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs), seeking developers to submit and implement specific plans. There is general support for these ideas in the Miller community. What remains to be seen is whether private investors will be found to make the concepts a reality.

RT. 20 EAST DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development Corp. is discussing with an unnamed developer the possibility of creating a “light industrial park” along the north side of Rt. 20, including the Fadel Dune, the Rt. 51 Plaza, and other property west to (but not including) Republic Frame and Axle. The idea is to build infrastructure – roads and utilities – and “spec” buildings (with no pre-signed tenants) on the model of the Ameriplex area in Portage. Such a development would create space for future businesses to occupy. On the plus side, the concept is being discussed with a real business which is prepared to invest in its implementation.

Some Miller residents are concerned about the inclusion of the Fadel Dune in the proposed development area. They would not like to see the dune disappear, even though it is already greatly depleted. They are also concerned that mining the sand from the dune would attract investors who would take the sand and then default on the constructive part of the agreement. On the other hand, the Fadel heirs, who own the property, already have a permit to mine the sand if they choose to do so.

CONCLUSION

Stay tuned to see what happens with all of these development opportunities.