



## ALL THE NEWS THAT IS FIT TO PRINT

By Sharon Babbitt

200 Park Avenue

### MEETING FUN

And it WAS FUN! A big crowd turned out (could it have been the lure of food?) The buzz of conversation filled the rooms, where tables had been placed by the Muschalls so we could all eat in comfort. Thanks to Kyle and Cindy for their hospitality.

Kyle presented a report of all FPNA's accomplishments during the past year, a long list to be sure. The specially designed banner for our new identifying poles was on display, and it is a real gem. The Treasurer's report was presented. The Exterior Holiday Decorating Award was presented to Richard and Clara Hobbs (see photo on page 6 ). The need for volunteers for a committee on the proposed new home building on the empty lots on Park was discussed, as well as the volunteers required for the upcoming Restore Omaha conference. Nominations were called for to fill the three expiring Director positions. Although there were several names mentioned, in the end Kyle, Linda and Nate were re-nominated and elected by acclamation. They will each serve another two-year term. The meeting was then adjourned so the Board could have its private meeting following.

### FPNA BOARD MEETING

The first order of business was to elect the new officers for 2013 and appoint people to serve in the several other capacities. They are as follows:

President: Kyle Muschall  
Vice President: Linda Ring  
Treasurer: Dave Huggins  
Secretary: Carol Mattox  
DNA Special Representative: Amy Dixon  
Newsletter Publisher: Kyle Muschall  
Newsletter Editor: Sharon Babbitt

It was decided to submit grant requests to PCCF and CURB for additional identifying poles (see technical drawing on page 6); to arrange with Sherbondy's Nursery to plant the flower baskets for the five poles which will soon be installed; to repair the watering device now in Michelle's possession because watering these baskets is now more important than

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# Mayor’s Neighborhood Cabinet

Ryan Willar

Neighborhood Center

Tuesday, December 11, 2012  
7:00am

- Fiscal Health of the Community Report from the City Finance Dept.:
  - **Recap of the flood** – We spent about \$16 million so far and when all projects are completed, the amount could be around \$19.4 million. We expect the state and federal assistance will be just under \$15 million – so the cost to the city will have been about \$4.5 million. Does this mean the city is “out” that amount of money – the answer is no. While the city did indeed spend that amount, for that we completed, repaired or replaced many sewers on the west end. We have new pumps and equipment for use in normal operations and in the event of future disasters. To date, FEMA and the Iowa Department of Homeland Security have advanced \$10 million of our projected eligible costs.
  - **FEMA reimbursement of the 2008 wind storms** – The city recouped over \$1 million in costs previously declared ineligible with a successful appeal. This closed the books on that windstorm.
  - **Bond rating maintained at AA2**– The impact of the nationwide financial crisis of 2008 coupled with the flood threats did not hurt our financial standing. In fact, since 2008 our credit rating with Moody’s has moved up to AA2, based on the stability of the local economy, the financial management of the city’s resources, and its general fund reserve. This places the city among the top 20-25% of cities nationwide and enables the city to issue credit at very favorable interest rates. Just two weeks ago, issued about \$15 million of general obligation bonds for 2.28%. Stated another way, we got a 15-year mortgage for less than 2.3%.
  - **Money saved on refinancing**– The city was very quick to detect the fed’s trend to lower interest rates three years ago and had refinanced its debt at every viable opportunity since 2009. This past year we did so twice – saving about \$250,000 each time. That’s a half million of interest costs we won’t have to pay because we refinanced.
  - **Local economy shows flexibility and growth**– Indicators of the local economy continue to appear strong. Local option sales tax exceeds \$8 million annually – indicative of good retail and commercial activity. Gaming revenue has recovered from a three year decline. Hotel tax grows and occupancy rates remain higher than the national average – due to leisure and business stays from events in both Council Bluffs and Omaha.
  - **City Finance Department recognized nationally**– The city received the award of excellence in financial reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association for its 2011 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. It will receive an unqualified audit for the year that ended in June 2012.
  - **City seeks to leverage its assets**– The city recently conducted searches for organizations to manage its major “buildings” the Mid America Center and the Riverside Dodge Clubhouse restaurant. This should bring added revenue or lower costs to reduce the burden of these operations to the taxpayer.
  - **No increase to property tax rates** – Despite annual material increases in police and fire retirement systems, and some growth in the cost of providing services, the last property tax increase was in 2006.
- Four homes on Park Ave being demolished and discussion about other home demolitions
  - Many considerations go into homes before they are demolished (e.g., amount of damage, developer interest, private party interest, cost of repair, etc.)
- Condition of certain alleys in the Kaneshville-Tinley neighborhood was discussed
  - Generally speaking, most alleys are not maintained by the city as money is designated for roads, which have far higher traffic, not alleys, and investing in alleys would take away money from road projects that are needed
  - Certain alleys have been vacated, but at the request of a homeowner or homeowners, and is done on an individual basis
- A home in the Roberts Park neighborhood that was being worked on but is now boarded up was discussed, and the location was recorded
  - Generally speaking, if the property is not city-owned, the city will look up who owns the property and attempt to

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION LOAN PROGRAM

The Historic Preservation loan program is designed to assist eligible homeowners located in specific target areas in and around the downtown area to make repairs to their property. This program is in conjunction with the Housing Rehab Program.

Eligible repairs include exterior improvements (such as gutters, roofing, painting, siding, retaining walls, concrete work and window replacement) and interior improvements (such as electrical, plumbing and mechanical system updates). The architectural integrity of the homes assisted through this program shall be preserved. The program is operated on a first come, first served basis until all funds are expended or committed.

Eligibility is based upon the number of persons in the household and the yearly income of everyone living in the household. Properties which have received funds under the City's rehabilitation or ownership programs are not eligible to receive assistance for 20 years.

All properties assisted through the Historic Preservation Loan Program shall remain as single-family, no conversions to multi-family use will be allowed. Rental properties and homes purchased on a land sales contract are not eligible. The CD Forbearance Loan, CD Forgivable Loan and CD Principal Only Loans are all loans available through the current Housing Rehab Program. For more information contact:

The Community Development Department at (712) 328-4629.

## The President’s Corner

Kyle Muschall

332 Glen Avenue

I am sure a lot of you noticed the recent activity on Park Avenue prior to the Holidays. The City hired National Concrete Cutters to demolish the four derelict houses on upper Park and one on lower Park Avenue. Please see the photos on pages 4 and 5.

While the homes have not been occupied for quite some time, some as many as 20 years, it was truly unfortunate that nothing more substantive could be done to preserve and rehabilitate them. Many were fine examples of historical homes that sadly fell to extreme neglect and disrepair.

There was a change in the Iowa state law back in 2005 that finally gave the City the right to seize the condemned properties and deal with them conclusively. I want to thank the many neighbors who took up the cause over the years to drive to a solution. It has been a long struggle with many set backs and impediments along the way but we are now finally seeing the results.

The work is not done, far from it. The FPNA is forming a committee to work with Don Gross and the City to ensure that the homes that are built on the lots will retain the historical fabric of the neighborhood. Park and Glen are, after all, on the National Register of Historic Places. This important designation is not permanent. We have to work to maintain this distinction.

At a City Council Study session in December FPNA board members discussed this very same topic with Don Gross and the City Council, who have been working with us, your neighborhood representatives. The City Council is also in favor of turning the 400 Block of Park into an Enterprise Zone so that any prospective developers could receive tax incentives and grants to make the project more appealing to them, The City Council will also require them to build single-family homes that have exteriors that are consistent with Victorian or early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture.

The FPNA committee wants to make sure our input is factored into the decision on the developers and the plans for the lots. I urge anyone who is interested in this vital issue to join the committee. You can contact me via email at kmuschall@cox.net. to let me know.

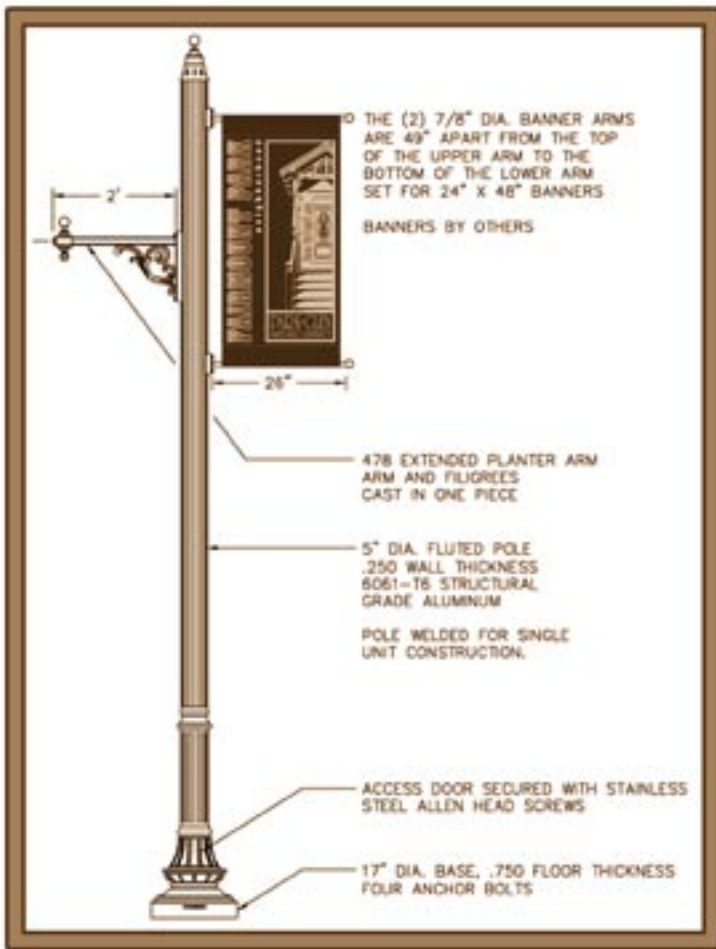


# PARK AVENUE 400 BLOCK DEMOLITION



Photos by Kyle Muschall





Richard and Clara Hobbs 500 Glen Avenue

## FIT TO PRINT

Continued From Pg.1

ever; to hold another garage sale in 2014 but not in 2013, following our established precedent of having a garage sale every other year; to table the discussion on another home improvement tour for a future Board meeting.

The next FPNA membership meeting will be held in March, date and place to be announced later.

### HOLIDAY WRAP-UP

A few last things before we stop talking about our recent holiday experience.

First thing: The FPNA Board toured the neighborhood one cold and icy evening, studying all the beautiful holiday lights, after first having looked around in the daylight hours. We only slid on ice a little bit before the old but trusty Subaru continued its forward trajectory. We drove past some beautiful sights before deciding the winner of FPNA's Best Exterior Holiday Decoration Award for 2012. **THE WINNER IS:**

500 GLEN AVE., homeowners Richard and Clara Hobbs. We were impressed with the light show, which covered both the front and side views of their home. Because it was situated on a corner lot, the Hobbs family had to decorate twice as much to make the impact they achieved. Congratulations to them!

**BREAKING NEWS!** When they were presented with their award plaque and \$100 check at the meeting, Dick and Clara generously donated the \$100 back to FPNA so we could buy flowers for the new baskets on our identifying poles, when they're installed this year. Thank you, Dick and Clara, for this surprise donation!!

Second thing: **HONORABLE MENTIONS.** Several homes deserved this distinction, and any one of them could have been the winner. These homes are: 420 Glen Ave.; 151 Park Ave.; 226 High School; 341 Huntington; 327 Huntington; 150 Glen Ave.; and 223 Park Ave. Each home featured outstanding and unique elements, which we appreciated. Congratulations to them!

Third thing: **ALL THE REST.** We saw beautiful lighting and decorating ideas everywhere, making our neighborhood glow with holiday cheer. Thanks to all.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Restore Omaha  
March 1-2

March FPNA Meeting  
TBD



## RESTORE OMAHA 2013

**R**estore Omaha Volunteers are needed. Our 2013 Conference and Reception are literally around the corner. I am continuing to schedule volunteers for both the Friday, March 1st reception, being held at the newly-renovated Scottish Rite building and our Saturday conference, March 2nd at Metropolitan Community College South Omaha Campus. I am scheduling two to three shifts (3-4 hours) for each event. Friday evening 6:00 and 8:30 shifts and Saturday from 7:30 or 8:00 A.M. through our deconstruction; exact details will follow.

Our reception volunteers may be asked to direct patrons with parking, sign them in and guide them as they tour the Scottish Rite building. Our Saturday volunteers are needed to set up and serve food, sign in attendees, assist vendors with set up, direct attendees to and from break-out sessions, proctor the sessions and help with tear-down at the end of the day.

As usual, those volunteering will be invited to attend the remainder of the conference for free. Please Michelle Mutchler-Burns at 712-322-1448 or email [gopack8763@aol.com](mailto:gopack8763@aol.com) with questions!

## Mayor's Neighborhood Cabinet

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contact the property owner to discuss the property  
- 100 Block brick apartments on the back side are scheduled to be coming down soon

- Proposals are due Friday, December 14, for River's Edge Park on the dry side of the levee

- The 1<sup>st</sup> phase is likely to have apartments and condos
- River's Edge Park is scheduled to open in May 2013
- May 25 is expected to be the first concert, and they are trying to bring in a nationally known band (expected to draw in around 20,000 people)
- Three weeks of activities are expected to be planned starting May 25, and these activities are planned to cover all age ranges and a variety of interests to bring everybody down to the park
- The November report for building permits showed the same amount of houses built already this fiscal year than all of the last fiscal year (this fiscal year will end June 30, 2013)
  - This should put total building permit levels by the end of the fiscal year back similar to 2007 levels

**"We do not stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing"**

**Benjamin Franklin**

# THE Fairmount Press

The Newspaper of the Fairmount Park Neighborhood Association

332 Glen Avenue Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503  
[www.fairmountparkna.org](http://www.fairmountparkna.org)

Kyle Muschall	President/Publisher
Linda Ring	Vice President
Carol Mattox	Secretary
Dave Huggins	Treasurer
Sharon Babbitt	Editor
Amy Dixon	Special Representative

Sharon Babbitt	Board Member (2014)
Kyle Muschall	Board Member (2015)
Nate Watson	Board Member (2015)
Dave Huggins	Board Member (2014)
Carol Mattox	Board Member (2014)
Linda Ring	Board Member (2015)
Michelle	Board Member (2014)
Mutchler-Burns	

## Have an Opinion? Please Share!

**W**e welcome any submission from a member that constructively furthers a topic of current public interest. Of course, opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Association or its membership. Any submission must be received by the first day of the month for inclusion. Please Contact the Editor.

## COPIES PROVIDED BY THE



**Yes!** I want to be an active member of the Fairmount Park Neighborhood Association. Please find enclosed a check for annual dues in the amount of \$20.00 per household.

My Name and Spouse's/Significant Other's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Names and Ages: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Numer: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Remit to:** Dave Huggins, Treasurer, 150 Park Avenue Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503



**Yes!** I want to purchase a Fairmount Park Neighborhood Association banner.

Please find enclosed a check for the Banner fee of \$12.00

(Or additional amounts of \_\_\_\_\_ for additional banners totaling \_\_\_\_\_.)

You must be a paid member to purchase a banner

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Numer: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Remit to:** Kyle Muschall, President, 332 Glen Avenue Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503 or Dave Huggins, Treasurer, 150 Park Avenue Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503