

Alderman Backes Update

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Hello everyone! It's been a little bit. If you know anything about the school calendar, you know the last couple months of the school year tend to be insane for us teachers. But the light is at the end of the tunnel—before we know it, kids will be out for the summer, and we'll have come to the end of yet another cycle.

I wanted to start off by saying thank you to the voters of District 2 who showed faith in me for another term. I'm honored to have your support and am looking forward to three more years of serving our neighborhood, after which it will likely be time for me to step aside and encourage more young and energetic people to get involved in local politics.

Congratulations also to Alderperson Michal Olechowski, who won the other seat in the second district. District 2 now has the distinction of having the two newest and youngest alderpersons in the district, and I am hopeful that this encourages more new people to get involved in all aspects of our community, whether it's in running for elected office or in volunteering (and there are so many opportunities for volunteers).

With summer approaching, there are a number of things around the city to be excited about that aren't too far off the horizon. But let's take a look at some of the things that are happening right now.

Lakeview Elementary's Everbrite project

A month or so ago, Lakeview Elementary principal Chris Sepersky reached out to myself and city administrator Patrick Brever with a really cool idea: an all-school project that would involve students proposing their ideas for the future of the currently vacant Everbrite campus on 5th Avenue. His idea was that students would be able to pay occasional visits to the property itself to get inspiration for their ideas.

Patrick helped coordinate communication with the folks at Everbrite, and this idea has now become a reality. Lakeview students are getting a chance to explore a place right in their backyards that has a tremendous amount of possibility and potential for our community, and District 2 in particular.

This is such a unique opportunity for students. In a city like South Milwaukee that is without much vacant land, chances to reimagine the future of the equivalent of multiple blocks worth of land do not come up very often. As the city continues to market the property, this also gives kids a chance to have their own voices heard about what they imagine could be possible in the space.

Also, this is a fantastic example of the city and school district working together to accomplish something really cool. When these two entities collaborate in this way, special things can happen.

Great work to Mr. Sepersky and the entire Lakeview staff! If you're interested, TMJ4 recently did a feature on this project, which you can [watch here](#). It features Mr. Sepersky and Mrs. Christine Henneberry, who my oldest son is fortunate to have as a K5 teacher!

Also tangentially related: congratulations to Lakeview on hitting 1,000 Golden Lions for this year! Students receive Golden Lions for acts of kindness or engagement in school. Mr. Sepersky followed through on a promise to [have his head shaved](#) as a result. My son thought this was hilarious.

Lead service line replacement: it's coming

The city recently mailed out 42 lead service line replacement letters to property owners on Park Ave., between Lake Drive and North Chicago Ave. The city has already replaced lead water lines on that street, beginning in the 500 block.

Due to federal requirements (and a city ordinance created to abide by those requirements), property owners are required to replace their private side lead service line when the public side is replaced. The city will not be reconnecting to old lead service lines, as this goes against those federal regulations and our requirement as a city to eliminate lead service lines over the course of the next several years.

As I've written about in previous blogs, the good news is that there is funding in place from multiple sources (the DNR, the American Rescue Plan Act) that will help mitigate some of these costs, and there is a financing plan available for homeowners to pay back costs over the course of a decade. The council recently awarded a contract for the Lead Service Line Replacement Project.

If you have questions about lead service line replacement, please reach out to Ben Huffman, South Milwaukee's Water/Wastewater Superintendent, at 414-768-8070.

This is going to be a big issue here in district two in particular, with lots of older houses with lead service lines. My house is one of them.

Quick updates

A few other shorter updates that may be of interest:

- Congratulations to new city engineer Genevieve Stollenwerk on achieving her professional engineering license! Big career milestone. We're fortunate to have her in our city!
- The council recently authorized the purchase of 400 new recycling carts, as our city stock was down to very few left. These carts are available by request to replace damaged carts around the city.
- Multiple Earth Day events around the city went well! There was one at city hall, as well as one at South Milwaukee High School, and several businesses were active for Earth Day as well. Thank you to everyone who was involved in organizing these events.
- Progress continues to be made in terms of developments at 10th and Marquette and at the former Bucyrus Campus. I'm looking forward to being able to hear and share more about these projects, which are currently going through the plan commission.
- Congratulations to incumbent Angie DeFord and newcomer Andy Simmons on winning their school board elections! And a big congratulations to the entire city of South Milwaukee for passing a critical referendum for the school district.

There are some cool, fun things coming up here in the city. Let's make this a great summer.

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, email Alderman Backes at tbackes@smwi.org.