Improvements to Market and Exchange Plazas Approved

The Raleigh City Council has authorized the City Manager to sign a contract to provide renovations and improvements to Market Plaza and Exchange Plaza in Downtown Raleigh. Both plazas provide pedestrian access between Fayetteville Street and Wilmington Street.

The project involves renovations and improvements to both plazas, creating new, more flexible and modern public spaces. The improvements include the larger open areas, installation of new concrete unit pavers, concrete paving, seat walls, plantings, site lighting, a storm water drainage system, electrical service, water service, an irrigation system, screen enclosures, and shade structures. The project is tentatively scheduled to begin by the spring, with completion scheduled for the summer.

The lowest bid, for $1,129,897, was submitted by Holt Brothers Construction. Funding is appropriated in the City’s capital budget. The Small, Disadvantaged, Minority and Women Owned Businesses participation is 100 percent, based on the list of sub-contractors submitted as part of the bid process by Holt Brothers.

The pedestrian plazas were built in the 1960s through a private-public partnership between Wachovia, Raleigh Bank and Trust, and the City of Raleigh.

Public Utilities Department to Celebrate Fix-a-Leak Week

March 16 through March 22 is “Fix-a-Leak Week” – a time to join thousands of Americans who are chasing down running toilets and dripping faucets to save water and money. You can participate by using this opportunity to check your home for leaks.

Every year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sponsors Fix-a-Leak Week to raise awareness to the alarming amount of waste caused by undetected or unfixed leaks. The EPA estimates that more than 1 trillion gallons of water are lost each year from residential homes – that’s enough water to fill approximately 1,587,301 Olympic-size swimming pools!

To commemorate Fix-a-Leak Week, the City of Raleigh Public Utilities Department will participate in several public events during this week to promote the occasion.

- March 14 – See one of the Public Utilities Mascots, “Johnny the Running Toilet,” at the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Raleigh.

- March 21 – In partnership with the Wake Forest Home Depot, located at 11915 Retail Drive, join us, along with “Johnny the Running Toilet,” at 10 a.m. to learn more about fixing leaks in the bathroom and how to install WaterSense plumbing fixtures.

For more information on Fix-a-Leak Week activities, contact Leigh Ann Hammerbacher, Water Conservation Specialist, Public Utilities Department at 919-996-3468.

Urban Design Lecture Series Set for the Spring

From March through May, the City of Raleigh’s Urban Design Center will host a series of lectures featuring guest speakers focusing on a variety of topics related to urban design in Raleigh. The “UDC Talks” are held at the City of Raleigh Museum at 220 Fayetteville St. in Downtown from 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. The sessions are free and open to the public. Guests are encouraged to bring their lunch. Professional architects, landscape architects, and planners that attend are eligible to receive continuing education credits.

This year’s lecture series schedule:

- March 18 – Reflections from the Field;
- April 15 - Stone’s Warehouse; and,
- May 20 - Filling in the Gaps: Redevelopment and Rehab of Historic Raleigh

For additional information, contact Beth Nooe at 919-996-4635 or visit the City’s website, www.RaleighNC.gov, and type “UDC Talks” in the search engine.

Speculative Fiction Author James Maxey Selected 2015 Piedmont Laureate

James Maxey, a Hillsborough-based speculative fiction author, was named the region’s 2015 Piedmont Laureate. During 2015, Mr. Maxey will appear at workshops, reading programs and speaking engagements throughout Wake, Durham and Orange counties.

The Piedmont Laureate program is dedicated to building a literary bridge for residents to come together and celebrate the art of writing. Co-sponsored by the City of Raleigh Arts Commission, Durham Arts Council, Orange County Arts Commission and United Arts Council of Raleigh & Wake County, the Piedmont Laureate program’s mission is to “promote awareness and heighten appreciation for excellence in the literary arts throughout the Piedmont region.”


Speculative fiction is an umbrella term encompassing the more fantastical fiction genres. These include science fiction, fantasy, horror fiction, weird fiction, supernatural fiction, superhero fiction, utopian and dystopian fiction, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction, and alternate history in literature.

“Speculative fiction is a genre that allows the writer to explore the boundaries of reality,” said Maxey. “It’s a way for readers to imagine what might be possible in the future, and how we might navigate the challenges that face us today.”

For more information about the Piedmont Laureate program, visit www.RaleighNC.gov and search for “Piedmont Laureate.”

To learn more about the Piedmont Laureate program, visit www.RaleighNC.gov and search for “Piedmont Laureate.”

Mr. Maxey writes fast-paced, action-driven pulp fiction with strong emphasis on character growth and world building, dealing with larger-than-life characters adventuring in exotic worlds. Readers who delve past the dragons and superheroes on the covers will discover stories that explore the deeper aspects of the human condition. They range from the highly personal — love, hate, grief, anger, faith and hope — to larger societal issues such as the balance between individual freedoms and social order, the inevitable conflict when society is built of unequal classes, and mankind’s relationship with the natural world. In the course of entertaining readers with imaginary worlds, Mr. Maxey hopes to provoke them into thinking more deeply about our own world and our shared responsibility to improve it.

Influenced by Carl Sagan, Stephen Jay Gould and Stephen Hawking, Mr. Maxey is a graduate of the Odyssey Writing Workshop where he studied with author-in-residence Harlan Ellison. He also is a graduate of Orson Scott Card’s Literary Boot Camp. He honed his craft over many years as a member of the Writer’s Group of the Triad and continues to be an active part of the Codex Writers’ online community. For more information on Mr. Maxey, visit www.jamesmaxey.net.

The Office of Raleigh Arts supports and promotes the arts in Raleigh by administering the programs of the City of Raleigh Arts Commission and the City’s Public Art and Design Board, and supporting the Pullen and Sertoma arts centers. The Office of Raleigh Arts is part of the City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department.

Trained Volunteers Offer Free Tax Preparation

AARP Tax-Aide is the nation’s largest free, volunteer-run tax assistance and preparation service. It is available to taxpayers with low income and middle incomes.

AARP Tax-Aide offers a variety of services each year which include:

• Face to face tax assistance and preparation at sites throughout the county such as libraries, senior centers, and churches; and,
• Free Electronic filing (e-filing) at ten tax preparation sites from February to April 15 in Wake County. E-filing is more accurate and processes the tax return more quickly.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers are trained and IRS certified each year to ensure their knowledge about the latest changes and additions to the U. S. Tax Code.

Because of the complexity of the U. S. Tax code, older taxpayers with low incomes may over pay their taxes or have to rely on expensive and, for many unaffordable professional tax preparation services.

Locations will be operational through Apr. 15 at their respective schedules. AARP Tax-Aide site locations in Raleigh area are:

• Tabernacle Baptist Church 8304 Leesville Rd. Raleigh M & W 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
• Martin St. Baptist Church 1005 E. Martin St. Raleigh T & Th 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.;
• Cambridge Village 951 S. Hughes St. Apex T & Th 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
• Five Points Center for Active Adults, Second floor, 2000 Noble Rd. Raleigh T & F 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.;
• Bond Park Community Center 801 High House Rd. Cary M, W & F 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.;
• Garner Avery Street Annex 201 Avery St. Garner T 12-6 Th 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.;
• Northern Wake Senior Ctr. 235 E. Holding Ave. Wake Forest T & W 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Appointments 919-554-4111;
• Longview Post Office 2308 New Hope Rd. Raleigh M & W 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Appointments 919-365-4248, walk-ins also welcome; and,
• Falcon Park Hut 105 Falcon Drive Fuquay Varina M & Th 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., appointments 919-552-1430.

To find the nearest Tax-Aide site, go to www.aarp.org/taxaide or call 1-888-227-7669.

Rock ‘n’ Roll Raleigh & Half Marathon Presented by WRAL set for April 12

On Sunday, April 12, Raleigh will host the second Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon & Half Marathon Presented by WRAL. The race will begin at 7 a.m. A map of the course can be found at http://cdn.runrocknroll.competitor.com/files/2013/02/RAL_15_CourseMap-21.pdf.

Runners start Downtown on S. Salisbury Street, run past the Capitol, Governor’s Mansion, Rose Garden and through the Oakwood neighborhood, as well as four of Raleigh’s universities before finishing back downtown on Fayetteville Street. The marathon runners and half marathon runners will split at Hillsborough and Gardner streets. The full marathon will travel through Meredith College before doubling back through North Carolina State’s Centennial campus.

You’re invited to get involved with this exciting event. Spectators are encouraged to line the route to cheer thousands of runners and walkers towards the finish line. Race organizers are still looking for volunteers at the pre-race expo on the Friday and Saturday before the race as well as during the races on Sunday. Volunteers can sign up at http://runrocknroll.competitor.com/raleigh/volunteer.

The race will also feature a number of live bands who will be performing at stops along the race course. The bands will feature a variety of music from alternative, classic and punk rock, blues, jazz, and soul. This year’s headliner will be Smash Mouth, known for their 90’s hits “All Star” and “Walking on the Sun.” Dance and cheer squads will also be located along the course to encourage runners along the way.

Money Magazine Finds Raleigh A Top Retirement City

Money magazine has tapped Raleigh as one of America’s five best retirement locales.

Five cities are listed as tops for retirement, all of which are small and have “the perks of an urban area without the big-city drawbacks” according to the magazine.

“This state capital’s thriving economy and proximity to top universities have long made it a prime relocation. It’s not hard to see the draw; Raleigh provides a big-city feel with a low cost of living; mild four-season weather; and, thanks to all of those medical schools, world-class health care,” writes Money.

The four other cities to make the grade are: Boise, Idaho; Lexington, Ky.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; and, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Raleigh’s Public Utilities to Begin Using New Customer Notification System (CNS)

Raleigh’s Public Utilities Department has partnered with GovDelivery to get messages rapidly to customers within our service area. In April, utility customers may begin receiving email, text and voice notifications based on the contact information associated with their utility accounts.

Customers will only receive notifications or alerts when they are directly affected by a situation, such as:

• Service interruption alerts: Water and sewer repairs that impact customer’s water or sewer usage;
• Water and sewer emergencies: Boiler water advisories or sewer overflows; and/or;
• Citywide emergencies and disasters.

Ensure you receive the customer notifications by updating your contact information. Existing water and sewer utility customers can verify or update the contact information on their utility accounts online at https://ubwss.raleighnc.gov/SelfService/SSvcController/Login, or by contacting the Utility Billing Customer Care Center by email at utilitybilling@raleighnc.gov, or at 919-890-3245.

Visit your City Online at www.raleighnc.gov for the Latest City News, Hot Topics and Alerts.
Raleigh Reminds Residents of Winter Storm Guidelines
The City of Raleigh offers the following simple guidelines that residents should follow during winter storms:

Limit Driving
Not only do winter storms make driving treacherous but clogged roadways make it extremely difficult for snow-removal crews and emergency personnel to do their jobs;

Use Cellular Phones Very Sparingly
The use of cellular telephone channels is critical for emergency personnel during an emergency. Emergency personnel cannot communicate if the channels are clogged with unnecessary chatter;

9-1-1 Is for Emergencies Only
Remember that the Raleigh-Wake County Emergency Communications Center is there for emergencies only. Do not call 9-1-1 for information on closings or road conditions. Turn to the media or the City’s website www.raleighnc.gov for this information;

Reporting Power Outages
Call Duke Energy at 800-419-6356 to report power outages or to gain information about electrical service; and,

CAT Bus Information Source
For the latest information on Capital Area Transit (CAT) routes, call 919-485-RIDE (7433) or visit www.gotriangle.org.

No Ammonia in Water and Annual Flushing of Water Distribution System is February 25 through April 8
The City of Raleigh temporarily stopped adding ammonia to its water treatment disinfecting process on Wednesday, February 25 at 10 a.m.

This change in treatment is required by federal and state regulations governing the operation of the City’s water system. The City will resume adding ammonia to the water treatment process on Wednesday, April 8 at 10 a.m.

Using ammonia in the treatment process reduces the amount of trihalomethanes, a by-product formed when water is disinfected with chlorine. The one-month return to chlorine-only disinfecting is not expected to cause any significant increase in trihalomethanes. Trihalomethane levels are strictly regulated in drinking water. The City of Raleigh has maintained compliance with all limits on trihalomethanes since regulations were put in place in 1981.

Some users of water may be affected by the temporary change in the treatment process. Water customers should be aware that residual traces of ammonia and chlorine must be removed from the water prior to use in fish tanks and ponds, kidney dialysis and some commercial manufacturing of food and beverages.

The City also conducts flushing of the water distribution system during this period to hasten the change of chloramines to chlorine residual disinfectant. This flushing may cause some temporary discoloration of the water. The water is absolutely safe. However, as a precaution, customers may want to check to see if their water is discolored before laundering white clothes.

Water customers affected by this change include those who pay water bills to the City of Raleigh and to the towns of Rolesville, Garner, Knightdale, Wendell, Wake Forest, Zebulon and Fuquay-Varina.

Questions about this change in water treatment should be directed to Edward Buchan, Public Utilities Environmental Coordinator at 919-996-3471, by mail at City of Raleigh Public Utilities Department, P.O. Box 590, Raleigh, NC 27602, or by email edward.buchan@raleighnc.gov.

It’s Our Responsibility
The following letter was sent to the City of Raleigh from a Capital City resident.

A short time ago, I encountered a type of animal cruelty that opened my eyes to another type. Both could be eliminated by caring, responsible human beings. Although it could apply to dogs, the animals I am referring to are cats. Some critters are dependent on humans for their existence. That gives us a responsibility for them and should shame us when we do not accept that responsibility.

Not long after losing both of my pet cats, I took in an abandoned cat who was eagerly looking for a home. He was very lovable. He was estimated to be between four and five years of age. He had not been neutered. When I took him to be neutered and for treatment of a possible tumor and an infection, it was discovered that he was too sick for antibiotics to be effective. Worst of all a test revealed that he had the HIV virus, could not be neutered and would have to be confined for the rest of his life because the disease is contagious to other animals. In his best interest, I made the only decision possible and had him put to sleep. That hurt and will for a long time.

My purpose in sharing this experience is the hope that it will encourage those who are negligent in spaying or neutering a pet to reconsider, and the hope that no one will abandon a pet with the idea that they have a good chance of finding a new home. Euthanasia is a terrible waste of an animal’s life that would make someone a loving companion. It bears repeating, the responsibility to prevent such suffering is ours, not our animals.

-- A Citizen Who Loves Animals

Did You Know...
The City of Raleigh has approximately 9,500 acres of open space; that includes parks and greenways.

Household Hazardous Waste Must Be Disposed of Safely
Household hazardous waste must not be disposed of in landfills because of their caustic properties and potential for environmental contamination. Wake County has established a collection program that allows residents to drop off these materials for proper disposal by a certified household hazardous waste contractor.

Wake County residents may take these materials to the North Wake Landfill, 9037 Deponie Drive, Raleigh or South Wake Landfill, 6130 Old Smithfield Road, Apex Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Accepted items include: acids/bases; fire extinguishers (dry chemical); fluorescent light bulbs; fuel oil/lighter fluid/household cleaners/chemicals; mercury thermometers; paints/lacquers/polishes; pesticides/herbicides/ poisons; photographic chemicals; propane tanks; and, solvents/thinners/ wood preservatives.

Unaccepted items include: ammunition; commercially generated waste; explosive/shock-sensitive items; hypodermic needles/syringes; medical waste; radioactive materials; smoke detectors; trash/recyclables; and, unknown materials.

For more information, contact Lowell Shaw at 919-856-7400.

City to Observe Good Friday Holiday; No Changes in Household Waste Collection
The City of Raleigh will observe Good Friday on April 3. While most administrative offices will be closed for the holiday, the collection of garbage, recycling and yard waste will follow the regular schedule on Good Friday. The City’s Yard Waste Center also will be open on Good Friday.

Furthermore, Capital Area Transit will provide regular bus service on the holiday, and emergency police, fire and rescue services may be reached by calling 9-1-1 on Good Friday.
No More than Three Hours Tethered - That's the Law!

Raleigh’s dog tethering ordinance regulates the unattended restraint or tethering of dogs. Under the measure, a dog may not be tethered for more than three hours total in any 24-hour period. The ordinance defines tethering as a means of tying out or fastening a dog outdoors on a rope, chain, or other line for restraining. The term does not mean the restraint of a dog on an attended leash.

Any device used to tether a dog must be at least 10-feet long and attached in a manner that prevents strangulation or other injury to the dog, or entanglement with objects. The device used to tether can weigh no more than 10 percent of the animal’s body weight and must allow the dog access to food and water. In addition to being a misdemeanor, a violation of the dog tethering ordinance would be subject to a civil penalty of $100 per day for each day of violation.

For more information on the Animal Control Ordinance or animal-related matters, call the City of Raleigh Animal Control Unit at 919-996-1449, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Litter - Either Thrown or Blown Is Illegal

North Carolina law states that whether it is blown, scattered, spilled, thrown or placed upon any public property or private property (not owned by the offender) litter is against the law.

North Carolina citizens can reduce litter by reporting violations of the state’s litter law through the Swat-A-Litterbug Program. Motorists who witness littering incidents can record the license plate number, date and location of the violation and forward this information to the North Carolina Department of Transportation’s Office of Beautification. Offenders will receive a letter outlining the litter laws along with a free car-litter bag. Citizens can report litterbugs directly by completing a Swat-A-Litterbug agent report on line at www.ncdot.gov/programs or by calling 1-877-368-4968.

Keep Meds Out Of Raleigh’s Water

The City of Raleigh offers the following guidelines to protect the environment and prevent unauthorized use of controlled substances, specifically medications:

- Do not flush any unused medications or pour them down a sink or drain. Pharmaceuticals detected in surface waters come from people flushing unused or expired medications into the sewer system. Some detected medications also occur from patient use as it passes through the human body unmetabolized.
- Be proactive and dispose of unused medication in household trash. When discarding unused medications, ensure you protect children and pets from potentially harmful effects by pouring medication into a sealable plastic bag. If the medication is a solid (pill, liquid capsule, etc.), crush it or add water to dissolve it. Add kitty litter, sawdust, coffee grounds, etc., to the plastic bag to make the medications less appealing to pets and children to eat. Remove and destroy all identifying personal information on the prescription label. Seal the bag and place it in the trash.

Sign Up for MyRaleigh Subscriptions for Free

My Raleigh Subscriptions is a free, subscription-based service offered to residents by the City of Raleigh. This service allows the City to provide residents access to relevant information by proactively delivering new information through email and wireless alerts.

Subscribers may select to receive email or text message notifications about a variety of City topics. The 100 plus topics range from alerts, newsletters, meeting agendas, new releases, event information, project updates, service notices to recreation information.

To learn more, visit the City’s website at www.raleighnc.gov and go to MyRaleigh Subscriptions in the left column.

Call In Abandoned Shopping Carts

If you spot an abandoned shopping cart, contact Andrew Martin at andrew.martin@raleighnc.gov or 919-996-6886 or Marion Staley at 919-996-6874. Mr. Martin and Mr. Staley are with the City of Raleigh’s Solid Waste Services Department.

Simple Ways to Manage Your Utility Account

Web Self-Service Portal: With the Web Self-Service portal, it is easy to manage your City of Raleigh utility account online. At your convenience, you can quickly update account information, view current and past bills, pay your bill, review financial history and usage history, and enroll in E-Bill. Registration is simple:

- Go to www.raleighnc.gov
- Select Pay Utility Bill
- Select Pay Online
- Select Register and follow the on-screen instructions to get a user id and password

E-Billing: As a registered user of the Web Self-Service portal, you can elect to receive your City of Raleigh utility bills electronically. Each month when your paperless e-bill is ready, you will be alerted by an e-mail reminder. To enroll through Web Self-Service:

- Go to www.raleighnc.gov
- Select Pay Utility Bill
- Select Pay Online
- Select Log in to My Account
- Sign in to Web Self Service with your user id and password
- Select E-Billing and follow the on-screen instructions

If you have questions, contact the City of Raleigh Utility Billing Division at UtilityBilling@raleighnc.gov or call 919-890-3245 during normal business hours.

Moving? Stop Your Utilities Account Before You Go

If you are planning to move, remember to stop your City of Raleigh utilities account. Prior to moving out, notify Utility Billing (utilitybilling@raleighnc.gov or 919-890-3245) with the date you want your services stopped and your new mailing address. This will ensure your final bill is processed correctly with the actual meter reading and that your account will be closed.

If you don’t contact Utility Billing prior to moving, you could be responsible for paying the utility bills at your old address until a new account is initiated by a new resident or owner.

Report Backups Or Overflows Immediately

Please call the City of Raleigh Public Utilities Maintenance Division immediately at 919-996-2737 to report a sewer backup or overflow. When calling at a time other than 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, please dial the after-hours emergency number, 919-829-1930. The City is offering a $50 reward to each person who reports a confirmed sewer overflow.

Per City of Raleigh Code of General Ordinances, Chapter 3, Section 2-3004:

PAST DUE UTILITY ACCOUNTS

Disconnection and Reconnection Fees

The City of Raleigh may lawfully cause water or sewer service to be disconnected, or to remain disconnected, at a property when the applicable delinquent charges, fees and required deposit are not paid in full when due and payable. The disconnected service shall not be reinstated until payment of the water or sewer account is PAID IN FULL, including any disconnection, reconnection, meter removal or main disconnection charges.

Any past due utility account with water service charges will be assessed an additional fee of $50.00 when a trip is made to the property for the purpose of disconnecting the water service, removing the water meter, or disconnecting the water service at the main. This fee will be in addition to any service deposit required, service charges, penalty amounts and delinquency fees that may be applicable.

Any past due utility account for sewer-only service will be assessed a fee of $1,200.00 for disconnecting the service, and an additional fee of $1,200.00 to reconnect the service. These fees will be in addition to any service deposit required, or other charges, penalties and fees that may be applicable.