Aurora BOREALIS

AURORA ILLINOIS
CITY OF LIGHTS

2016 ISSUE 1

Mayor Thomas J. Weisner

HAIL TO THE CHIEFS

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New Fire Chief Gary Krienitz and New Police Chief Kristen Ziman take the reins at Aurora's major public safety agencies.

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Ziman Sworn in as Police Chief

Lauded commander is Aurora's first female chief

The Aurora City Council has named Aurora Police Commander Kristen Ziman to the post of police chief, with overwhelming support from the community.

Ziman is the department's first female chief and the 28th chief in the history of the Aurora Police Department.

"She has so many talents, she has a very high degree of education, and she has a professionalism that is—as we've seen, I think, in recent months—really called for," Mayor Tom Weisner said in his remarks following the City Council vote. "The nation really looks for a higher level of professionalism within our police departments across the country. I think Kristen is the person who can provide that here in the city of Aurora."

Weisner said that, upon announcing Ziman as his recommendation for the new chief, residents from across the city voiced their approval.

"I have been regaled by hundreds of people from across this community, from all parts of the community congratulating me and the City Council for recommending her," Weisner said.

Born and raised in Aurora, Chief Ziman has worked her way through the ranks during her nearly 25 year career with the Aurora Police Department, beginning as a police cadet in 1991.

A graduate of West Aurora High School, Ziman served three years as an Aurora Police cadet before becoming a sworn officer in 1994. She worked in patrol, field training, community policing and investigations as a domestic violence detective before being promoted to sergeant in 2003. She was promoted to lieutenant in 2008 and to commander in 2010.

Chief Ziman earned her Associate's Degree from Waubonsee Community College, Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from Aurora University, and Master's Degree in Criminal Justice Management from Boston University. In addition, she is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and completed the Kellogg Women's Senior Leadership Program at Northwestern University, the Senior Executives in State and Local Government program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and the Senior Management Institute for Police.

Just before being sworn in, Chief Ziman vowed to the residents of Aurora to be "relentless in the pursuit of peace in this community."

"We will work together to solve complex problems and we will build trust by enforcing the law with equity and with legitimacy," Ziman said, addressing the City Council chambers packed with supporters. "When we trust one another there are no bounds to the improvements we can make together."

Ziman has been "the first" in a number of positions throughout her career and has worked diligently to mentor other women in law enforcement locally and nationally. She is the Past President of the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE).

Mayor Weisner made his recommendation for a successor to retiring Chief Greg Thomas from among four internal candidates, following an extensive process of surveys, presentations and multiple interviews.

"I'm very pleased to recommend Kristen as our next chief," Weisner said. "Becoming Aurora's first female police chief is not the only way she has been a trailblazer and I'm confident that her considerable talent will lead the department to new heights."

Ziman and her spouse, Chris, have four children, Megan, Jimmy, Bailey and Jacob. She assumed the role of police chief immediately upon her swearing in on January 12.

Biography:

Police Chief Kristen Ziman

1991	Entered Aurora Police Department Cadet program
1994	Joined APD as a patrol officer
2003	Promoted to Sergeant
2008	Promoted to Lieutenant
2010	Promoted to Commander
2016	Appointed as Police Chief

New Police Chief Kristen Ziman is the 28th chief in the long history of the Aurora Police Department.

Kristen Ziman takes a selfie with a new friend at the 2015 National Night Out celebration in Aurora.

Department Veteran Named New Chief for Aurora Fire Department

Krienitz succeeds Lehman on top rung of AFD ladder

Aurora Firefighter of the Year in 2014.

Aurora Fire Marshal in 2015.

And now, in 2016, Aurora Fire Chief.

Mayor Tom Weisner and the City Council have named Aurora Fire Marshal Gary Krienitz to replace retiring Chief John Lehman as the next Chief of the Aurora Fire Department.

"You know when you have that feeling when something is just right? That's how I felt first entering a career in fire service and that feeling is even greater all these years later," Krienitz said of his appointment as Chief.

Chief Lehman advised Mayor Weisner several months ago that it he intended to retire in early 2016. The Mayor conducted an extensive internal selection process that included peer surveys, management evaluations and multiple rounds of interviews. Mayor Weisner decided on Krienitz from among six internal candidates.

"His natural leadership qualities, combined with his considerable experience and training, make him a solid choice for chief," the Mayor said of Krienitz. "Gary's strong record of volunteerism will help to carry on the tradition of the fire chief being an integral part of the Aurora community."

Krienitz is a 19-year veteran of the Aurora Fire Department. He began his career as a paramedic in 1997, was promoted to lieutenant in 2008, captain in 2014, and in April 2015 was appointed as Aurora's Fire Marshal.

"When I was in high school at Waubonsie Valley, a friend gave me an opportunity to ride with Medic 4 at Fire Station 4. Little did I know that brief ride-a-long would have such an impact on who I would become," he said. "Now to be considered for the position as the next Chief of the Aurora Fire Department is such a great honor."

In 2014, Krienitz was named Firefighter of the Year. He and Private Jason Larson and Private Dan Murphy earned the department's top award for their efforts in a dangerous motel fire, putting themselves in harm's way to save the lives of two people.

A member of the National Fire Protection Association and the International Association of Arson Investigators, Krienitz holds more than 15 certifications, including being a certified evidence technician, rescue specialist, arson investigator, emergency medical technician, juvenile fire setter counselor, and personal trainer. He has completed more than 50 training courses through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Illinois Fire Service Institute, the Illinois State Police Academy for Arson and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Krienitz earned his Fire Science degree from the College of DuPage and was a Team Leader with the DuPage County Fire Investigation Task Force.

A dedicated community volunteer, Krienitz mentors youth at Calvary Church, teaches Junior Achievement classes at local schools, and has put his extensive training and expertise to use with medical missions in Guatemala, Cambodia, the Philippines, Brazil, Bosnia, Belgium, Slovakia and Ethiopia. He and his wife Stephanie have two children, Claire and Kevin.

"Building on foundation laid by Chief Lehman, the Aurora Fire Department has the right tools needed to continue to improve and be the best," Krienitz said. "I look forward to working with my team to develop short-term and long-term goals that are realistic yet innovative, aggressive and efficient."

Biography:

Fire Chief Gary Krienitz	
1997	Joined the Aurora Fire Department, serving as a paramedic
2008	Promoted to Lieutenant
2014	Promoted to Captain
2014	Named AFD Firefighter of the Year
2015	Named Aurora Fire Marshal
2016	Appointed as Fire Chief

New Aurora Police Chief Gary Krienitz, second from right, was honored along with Private Jason Larson and Private Dan Murphy as the department's 2014 Firefighters of the Year. Krienitz, Larson and Murphy earned the department's top award for their efforts in a dangerous motel fire, in which they put themselves in harm's way to save the lives of two people. Pictured are, from left, Murphy, Fire Chief John Lehman, Krienitz, and Larson.

From the Mayor's Desk

Mayor Thomas J. Weisner

Aurora Open for Business!

Emerging from the worst national recession since the Great Depression itself, Aurora had a record-breaking year in 2015 in the world of business and development activity.

Aurora's focus during the recession on maintaining a balanced budget, working smarter and continuously upgrading infrastructure is paying off as the national economy heats up.

Our Building and Permits Division approved more than 3.45 million square feet of new development in 2015, with a total construction valuation of more than a half-billion dollars —an increase of 21% over 2014's permit valuations and a record single-year construction valuation for our City.

Driving these impressive numbers were not only new businesses choosing Aurora, like Aldi's, which bought a five-story office building in which to house its national IT staff, but an assortment of Aurora-based companies choosing to stay and expand in Aurora. I believe that when it comes to business growth, "retention is the highest form of flattery." Enlarging their stake in Aurora were companies like Schorr Packaging, Pittsburg Paint and Glass (PPG), Glambia, and Victory Packaging. Chicago Premium Outlets Mall, already a large source of sales tax revenue for Aurora, added 250,000 square feet of retail space last year, a sixty percent expansion.

Heralding Aurora as a place to do business was a recent story in Crain's Chicago Business about Peerless-AV entitled, "Bye China. Hello Aurora." Peerless, which previously had most of its product manufactured in China, has moved much of this manufacturing to its Aurora facility and now employs 400 workers on three shifts. With it's plentiful workforce, Aurora is now competing successfully on the global level.

The result? Even with our large workforce, unemployment levels in Aurora are well below other large Illinois cities with similarly diverse demographics… and below statewide unemployment levels, as well.

Those working in the construction trades are also being kept busy as they build the final residential units planned for Station Boulevard on the Far East Side of Aurora. One of the largest T.O.D.s or Transit Oriented Developments in Illinois, the Station Boulevard project features upscale apartments and townhouses that will have a direct connection to Metra's Route 59 commuter station, the busiest on all of Metra. When the latest round of construction is complete, more than 1,400 residential units in convenient proximity to the train station will serve Aurorans, particularly daily commuters.

We have all new leadership in the Public Safety arena. Kristen Ziman was sworn in as Aurora's first female Police Chief on January 12, 2016. She is highly qualified with varied experience from 25 years with the Aurora Police Department. She holds undergraduate degrees in criminal justice and a masters in criminal justice management from Boston University has pursued post graduate work in a number of areas. Kristen's excellent communications skills will help build internal morale and external trust.

Gary Krienitz became Aurora's 17th Fire Chief when he was sworn in on Feb. 17, 2016. Krienitz, a 19-year veteran of the Aurora Fire Department, most recently served as Fire Marshall (his predecessor, Matt Perez, now serves as State Fire Marshal).

Both Ziman and Krienitz take up their leadership roles at a relatively early age, giving them the opportunity to serve as chief for several years, thereby leaving a strong imprint on their respective departments. Join me in wishing them well.

It is also important that we acknowledge and thank both Chief Greg Thomas and Chief John Lehman who served very capably as our Police and Fire Chiefs before retiring recently. Many thanks for your service, gentlemen.

Weather Alert: New City Weather Station Improves Safety for Aurora Residents

Real Forecast for Aurora
Find real-time weather information for the City at ***www.aurora-il.org***

Aurora residents now have an extra level of safety, with the new state-of-the-art **WeatherBug Station** monitoring the skies in the heart of the City, giving better data about oncoming severe weather.

The live-streaming weather station provides real-time weather data to help make better weather-related safety decisions, and to deliver vital, timely weather information to residents both online at ***www.aurora-il.org*** and through the WeatherBug app.

The weather station camera, mounted on the roof of the Elmslie Building at 1 S. Broadway, provides Aurora Emergency Management Agency staff with a 360-degree view of approaching weather systems. And the camera provides residents with a clear, 24-hour-a-day look at weather in downtown Aurora.

"The addition of the **WeatherBug Station** is a great asset to the weather programs and tools used by the Aurora Emergency Management Agency to monitor the City of Aurora for approaching severe weather," said Joseph Jones, Aurora's Emergency Management Coordinator.

This real-time data is gathered every 2 seconds, and thus streams truly live information. The weather station measures temperature, wind speed and direction, precipitation, humidity and other data. A high-tech total lightning sensor detects and then triggers alerts to lightning that enters an unsafe range in neighborhoods around Aurora.

The station also is able to provide Aurora weather data for meteorological teams at WGN News, WeatherBug's local media partner. Through WeatherBug's Homeland Security Partnership Program, Aurora's weather data is made available to the National Weather Service in the event of an emergency.

Access Aurora's new **WeatherBug Station** on Aurora's website, ***www.aurora-il.org***. Or for Aurora weather straight to your phone or tablet, download the WeatherBug app, available for Android and iOS.

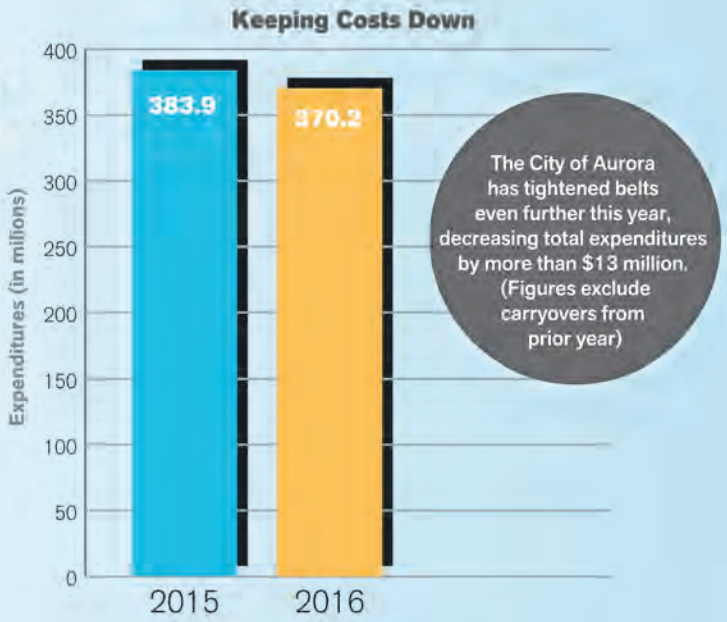
City's new budget shows $13 million drop in spending

The City's budgeted expenditures are expected to be down more than $13.6 million for 2016, compared to 2015.

The 2016 City of Aurora budget, which is available online, was unanimously passed by the Aurora City Council. The City remains committed to "tightening the belt" and optimizing the deployment of public resources.

Net total expenditures for 2016 are estimated at $370,243,391, down about 3.5% from the net total expenditures of $383,855,542 in 2015. (These figures do not include carryovers from prior year.)

Visit ***www.aurora-il.org/finance/budget.php*** to learn more about the 2016 budget.



Pop-Up Shops Show Off Downtown

After a successful 2015 season, the first downtown Aurora Pop-Up Shop for 2016 is planned for the First Friday celebration in March.

Interest is certainly popping up in downtown Aurora.

Invest Aurora, Aurora Downtown, and the City of Aurora's Neighborhood Redevelopment Division worked together to offer a series of "Pop-Up Shops" in vacant downtown buildings for the 2015 First Friday celebrations and the downtown Winter Lights Festival.

"It's a way of 'trying out' downtown. We can provide them a list of available properties," Brett Michaelson of Invest Aurora said about the reason small businesses have been joining in the downtown Pop-Up Shop festivities.

An estimated 300 to 400 visitors checked out the Pop-Up Shops each month for First Fridays.

At the Winter Lights celebration in November, 14 small businesses featured their specialties at the Pop-Up Shop at 13 S. Broadway: Biscocho's baked goods; Modest Coffee; AromaRoots, offering natural home/health products; Kittens of Industry, with art and illustrations; Lindsay O'Dowd, art and photograph; Gingham Turtle soaps; Thrifty Upenyu, with African fabrics and accessories; Jeff Weber home goods; Rebecca Deking, hand painted ornaments; Marsh Wren jewelry; Bear With Me Jewelry; Bettina's Tea; Spice Theory spices; and Picker Sisters, offering holiday items, wrought iron and floral items.

A Pop-Up event is meant to re-activate vacant spaces temporarily in walkable, urban places. Aurora has a historic, walkable downtown—and vacant spaces in strategic downtown locations ideal for such an event.

The downtown Pop-Up Shop season resumed for the March First Friday festivities. Other Pop-Ups are planned for First Fridays in May, August, and October.

For information on taking part in a downtown Pop-Up event, contact Justin Root, management assistant in the City's Neighborhood Redevelopment Division, at (630) 256-3328 or ***jroot@aurora-il.org.***

Customers sample the offerings at a summertime Pop-Up Shop at 59 S. LaSalle St.

A **POP-UP** event is meant to re-activate vacant spaces temporarily in walkable, urban places. Aurora has a historic, walkable downtown—and vacant spaces in strategic downtown locations ideal for such an event.

Gingham Turtle shows off a variety of soaps at the Pop-Up Shop on LaSalle Street in downtown Aurora.

2015 Emergency Team volunteers learn how to extinguish fires.

Aurora Emergency Management Puts Out Call for Volunteers

TO SIGN UP for Aurora Emergency Volunteer Services and Community Emergency Response Team: ***https://eforms.aurora-il.org/f/evsapp***

FOR INFORMATION on Aurora Emergency Management Agency: ***https://aurora-il.org/ema/index.php***

The Aurora Emergency Management Agency is looking for caring and dedicated individuals who want to serve their fellow man and community.

"We are always looking for good people with open minds and big hearts that want to serve as an Aurora Emergency Management Agency Volunteer in the Emergency Volunteer Services," said Joseph Jones, Aurora Emergency Management Coordinator.

Emergency volunteers assist with providing traffic control and scene lighting at motor vehicle accidents, aircraft accidents, at structure fires and at rescue operations. They also assist at many City events, parades and festivals. There also is a Weather Group that assists during severe weather watches monitoring the area as storms approach the City to help determine the need to activate the Outdoor Warning Sirens if needed.

Long History of Helping

The Emergency Volunteer Services was formed in 1998, operating under the direction of the City of Aurora's Emergency Management Agency. Emergency Volunteer Services is the result of the combination of two long-time Aurora volunteer groups; the Citizen Radio Patrol (organized in 1974) and the Aurora Emergency Management Agency Volunteers (organized in 1960). Emergency Volunteer Services assists Aurora's emergency management personnel and first responders with manpower and equipment during emergencies and municipal events.

A Community Emergency Response Team group was added to the Emergency Volunteer Services program in June of 2015. This program is in the developmental stage with member recruitment and training. The main focus of this team is to supplement the Emergency Volunteer Services program in response to planned public events and disaster management activities.

In December 2015, a Ground Search and Rescue class was held and that function has been added to the Emergency Volunteer Services and Community Emergency Response Team programs. The Ground Search and Rescue involves searching for individuals—and in some cases, evidence.

Currently, there are 47 volunteers serving the Aurora Emergency Management Agency in the functions of Emergency Volunteer Services and Community Emergency Response Team. During 2015, these volunteers logged more than 2,000 hours of service to the community.

To join the City's Emergency Volunteer Services and Community Emergency Response Team, follow this link to complete and complete an application: ***https://eforms.aurora-il.org/f/evsapp.***

To learn more about the City of Aurora Emergency Management Agency, visit ***https://aurora-il.org/ema/index.php.***

Aurora sets records for new construction in 2015

Development in the City of Aurora is growing again at a breakneck pace, and that's meant a record-setting busy year for the City's Building and Permits Division.

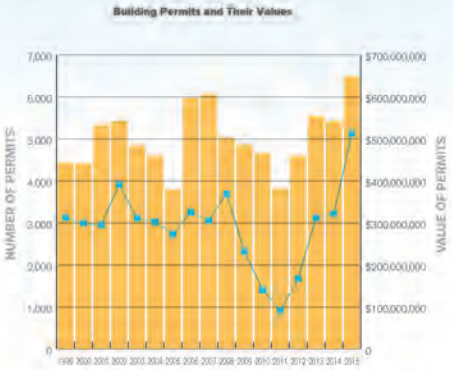
"It has been very busy, and that's a very good thing," said John Curley, Director of Building and Permits for the City of Aurora. "As a team, we have implemented a lot of new technology and improved our workflow to get new developments open for business efficiently. When a property owner wants to do business in Aurora, we want to work with them."

In 2015, the team issued 6,490 building permits, more than any year since at least 1999.

In the past three years, the City has issued more than 17,000 permits, including new construction, expansions and improvements to homes and businesses across the city, a three-year average higher than any in recent history, including the years of the pre-recession construction boom.

Those permits represent more than $513 million in property value added to the City of Aurora just in 2015 – a 59 percent increase over the year before. They include major retail projects like the Chicago Premium Outlets addition and the Plaza on New York, expansions for large employers like Rush-Copley Medical Center and Gonnella Baking, and millions of dollars of new retail spaces built by developers who put their confidence in Aurora as an economically strong and growing community.

All of that adds up to more choices for shoppers, more amenities for residents, more opportunity for job seekers, and additional retail tax dollars to help ease the tax burden on residents and improve Aurora's economy.



A GROWING TRADITION:
City to Celebrate with Arbor Day Tree Planting

Mayor Tom Weisner and City officials will join students, teachers and school administrators in making Aurora a little greener for Arbor Day 2016.

Every Arbor Day, the Mayor visits schools around the city to encourage students to learn about trees and their value to our community—and to help them in planting trees on school grounds. On Arbor Day April 29, the tree-plantings will take place at Waubonsie Valley High School, East Aurora High School, and O'Donnell Elementary School. Other activities planned for the day may include songs and poems performed by the students.

"We are very proud of our environmental and sustainability efforts in the City of Aurora," the Mayor said of last year's Arbor Day celebration. "As we celebrate Arbor Day, we take the opportunity to strengthen those efforts by planting trees with those whose lives will be impacted in the future by what we do in the present—our children."

Arbor Day began in 1872, when J. Sterling Morton set out to plant a million trees in one day across Nebraska. Since then, people all over the world have adopted springtime tree-planting holidays.

Aurora Central Catholic High School students plant a tree for Arbor Day 2015

City Offers Savings to Residents on Planting Parkway Trees

In an effort to continue replanting the City's urban forest, the City of Aurora will again offer the 50/50 Parkway Tree Program this spring and fall.

The 50/50 Parkway Tree Program allows residents to purchase trees for planting in parkways for half the typical cost, with the City paying the remaining cost. This year's program includes a spring planting of elms, maples, oaks and additional varieties suitable for planting in the spring months. Elms, maples, and other species will be available in the fall. Residents should consider the species of tree that would suit their parkway and order accordingly.

The deadline for ordering a tree for spring planting is March 18. The deadline for fall planting is Sept. 23.

The discounted cost of the trees, which depends upon the species and size of the tree selected, will be posted at ***aurora-il.org/streetmaintenance/5050_parkway_tree_program.php***. The cost includes planting and mulching.

To be eligible for the 50 percent discount, trees must be planted in parkways on the front or sides of a resident's property, and must be set back from utilities, intersections and other trees. More information, including species and price lists, is available on the City's website, ***aurora-il.org***.

Tree orders will be taken first-come, first-served. To be added to the waiting list, call the City of Aurora's Customer Service line at 630-256-INFO.

Aurora's 50/50 Parkway Tree Program allows residents to purchase trees for planting in parkways for half the typical cost.

City Tree Board Announces

Aurora's New Heritage Trees

The City of Aurora's Tree Board has selected 20 trees around the community as the first members of the City's Heritage Tree Recognition Program.

Through the National Historic Tree Registry, the new Heritage Tree Recognition Program recognizes those trees that add to the value, aesthetics and character of Aurora neighborhoods.

Aurora's new Heritage Trees are located on both the East and West sides of the City:

- Silver Maple, in the backyard at 640 Laurel Drive
- Northern Catalpa at Phillips Park, and Bur Oak at the Phillips Park Golf Course
- Black Walnuts at 1041 W. Downer Place and 434 S. Lake St.
- European Larch in front of the Tanner House Museum at 305 Cedar St.
- Crabapple at Washington Middle School
- Red Mulberry at West Aurora High School
- Two Norway Spruce at 835 W. Galena Blvd.
- Bur Oaks at McCullough Park and Herget Middle School
- Pin/Swamp Oak and Red Oak at 350 Lawndale Ave.
- Red Oaks at 425 West Park Ave. and Abraham Lincoln Park
- American Linden at 625 Hardin Ave.
- Siberian Elm at 923 S. Fourth St.

The Tree Board also named two Trees of Distinction—an American Elm on the parkway at 50 S. LeGrande Ave., and a Cottonwood at Edinburgh Park.

To be considered for recognition as a Heritage Tree, a tree must be at least 50-years-old and meet minimum size requirements. In addition, the tree must have some other significance, for example: trees listed on state or national registries, trees associated with an historic event or person, trees planted for Arbor Day or in memory of an individual or event, trees that provide a unique habitat for wildlife, trees of a unique or rare species, or simply trees or groves of trees with incomparable aesthetic qualities.

These trees selected for Heritage Tree status will be recognized during Arbor Day events in April 2016. The trees will be entered into the National Historic Tree Registry, and will be added to the City's Geographic Information System to help protect them from changes in infrastructure, construction and property ownership. (The program is voluntary and non binding, and there are no additional requirements for the preservation of trees on the registry.)

For more information on the Tree Board, visit the City website at ***www.aurora-il.org***.

Members of the Aurora Fire Department paid tribute in January to three of their comrades who died in the line of duty 82 years ago. Firefighters Martin Valenzuela and Joshua Petersohn and dozens of current Aurora firefighters joined in the memorial service for Firefighter Charles Hoffman, Capt. John Petersohn, and Capt. Herbert L. Reiss who died on Jan. 11, 1934, in a blaze at the Woolworth 5 and 10 store.

What Happens When Two People Want to Adopt Same Animal?

Have you ever wondered how Aurora Animal Control decides who gets to adopt that sweet little puppy or kitty that everyone wants?

Basically, it comes down to the luck of the draw.

In situations where more than one person is interested in adopting the same pet, Aurora Animal Control tries to be fair to everyone involved. One member from each family enters their name into a drawing to see who will get ownership of the pet. All interested individuals must be present at the time and date the animal is available for adoption at the Animal Control and Care Facility at 600 S. River St. Each person completes an entry form with their name on it. All the names then are placed in a container, and the winner is drawn by someone who is not participating in the drawing.

Once the drawing has been completed the winner's name will be checked for prior violations of Animal Control ordinances. If the person has a history of violations, that will disqualify him or her from completing the adoption transaction. If that happens, another drawing will take place with the remaining interested individuals until a person with no prior violations is selected.

The winner selected must be capable of completing the adoption process and pay adoption fees at the time of the drawing. Otherwise, another name will be drawn.

For information on adopting a pet and the City's Division of Animal Control and Care, visit ***https://www.aurora-il.org/animalcontrol.php***.

'Sierra' the wolf enjoys the wintry weather at the Phillips Park Zoo

A WINTER'S TAIL: Phillips Park Zoo Animals Cope With the Cold

So who do you think has more fun in the winter, you or an otter?

Randy Johnson, Zoo Manager of Aurora's Phillips Park Zoo, said all of the animals at the Zoo are primarily North American, which means that they are capable of handling the weather extremes (to a point) in our area.

"All of our outdoor animals stay outside year round," Johnson said. "Our wolves and otter are probably the biggest fans of winter. The cold does not seem to bother them. Our otter swims in her pool on the coldest days. Our wolves sleep on the snow and are more active this time of year than any other."

For all of the animals, Zoo Keepers put out straw in various places for the animals to access, if they want it.

"Our elk have three "wind breaks" that we have made that have straw in them so that they can bed down out of the wind, or they can go into their shelter which is also layered with straw. Same for our otter, wolves and cougar," Johnson said.

Most of the outdoor animals have some sort of heated water container to make sure that fresh water is always available.

The Zoo's birds of prey are also adapted to Aurora's winters, except for the Harris Hawk which is a desert dweller. The Harris Hawk has a small, heated shelter where she is kept in in the winter time.

As far as diet goes, the Zoo Keepers begin "upping" some of the animal's food in the fall, so that the animals begin prepping for the winter. The animals are fed per their feeding schedules year round.

The animals don't take holidays off, so Zoo staff is there every day, including holidays, to make sure that the animals are fed and cared for.

"The Zoo Keepers also have to be prepared for the winter," Johnson said. "Since most of our animals are outdoors, they, too, are outdoors in the cold handling their responsibilities."

And on days when it snows, the Zoo Keepers are out shoveling and snow blowing, to make the zoo accessible to visitors.

Johnson said the numbers of Zoo visitors drop off in the winter, but the Zoo does get many visitors on sunny, warmer, winter days.

For more information on the Phillips Park Zoo, at 1000 Ray Moses Drive on Aurora's southeast side, visit ***www.phillipsparkaurora.com***.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN AURORA!

MARCH

March 16 thru April 24

Broadway Series: West Side Story

It's the greatest love story ever told in a musical—watch the tragedy of Tony and Maria unfold with heart-wrenching ballads, steamy Latin beats and soaring lyrics, plus viciously intense and painfully romantic choreography in this Bernstein and Sondheim masterpiece. For tickets, go to paramountaurora.com.

March 19

Earth Hour

Join the City of Aurora and cities all over the globe in turning out your lights in honor of Earth Hour from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. tonight in support of action on climate change. Learn more at www.earthhour.org.

March 26

Low-cost Pet Wellness Clinic

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Aurora Animal Control
600 S. River Street

APRIL

April 2

Crime-free Housing Landlord Class (English)

8 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Aurora Police Department
1200 E. Indian Trail

Landlords throughout the City are required to attend this one-day seminar on their rights as property owners and their responsibilities to their tenants in providing safe, crime-free housing. To register, call (630) 256-3770.

April 4-15

FREE Spring Yard Waste Collection

For free pickup, yard waste must be bagged in 30-gallon Kraft paper bags and must not weigh more than 60 pounds. After April 15, yard waste requires a garbage sticker or it will not be collected.

For more information, visit aurora-il.org/sanitation/yard waste, or call 630-256-INFO.

April 4-Nov. 4

FREE Brush Collection April 4—November 4

Bundled brush may be left curbside, without a sticker, for free pickup. Branches and limbs that are ½ inch to 4 inches in diameter and 2 to 4 feet in length should be placed at the curb on your regular garbage collection day. Brush must be must be tied into bundles with twine or tape. Visit aurora-il.org/sanitation/yard waste, or call 630-256-INFO.

Aurora City Council and Committee of the Whole

Committee of the Whole meets at 5 p.m. in the fifth floor conference rooms of City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place, to offer more in-depth discussion of items in the public interest prior to a final vote the following week at City Council.

Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday

City Council meets at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 44 E. Downer Place. Those wishing to address the Council should contact the City Clerk's office at 630-256-3070 prior to the meeting.

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday

April 9

Low-cost Pet Wellness Clinic

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Aurora Animal Control
600 S. River Street

Crime-free Housing Landlord class (español)

8 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Aurora Police Department
1200 E. Indian Trail

For more information, call Officer Marco Gomez at (630) 256-5264.

April 23

Low-cost Pet Wellness Clinic

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Aurora Animal Control
600 S. River Street

April 29

Arbor Day

Each year, the City of Aurora celebrates the importance of trees in our community with planting ceremonies at schools around the city. Celebrate in your own backyard and learn about your trees and City of Aurora tree programs at aurora-il.org/streetmaintenance/trees.php.

April 30

Día de los Niños

1 to 5 p.m.
Spring and Lincoln Lot

Join in the Latin American tradition of celebrating children's contributions to our world with a day of fun and learning at Day of the Children. Book giveaways, live music, and activities for all ages.

Mayor Thomas J. Weisner
Aldermen
AT-LARGE: Robert O'Connor
AT-LARGE: Richard Irvin
WARD 1: Kristina "Tina" Bohman
WARD 2: Juany Garza
WARD 3: Ted Mesiacos
WARD 4: Bill Donnell
WARD 5: Carl Franco
WARD 6: Mike Saville
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The ***Aurora Borealis*** Community Newsletter is published through the City of Aurora's Community Relations and Public Information Division.

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Improvements Coming to Route 59 Train Station

Commuters who use the Route 59 Metra Station can look forward to more parking spaces and better traffic flow for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and public transportation users.

The City will begin work this spring on upgrades designed to improve commute times and reduce air pollution.

The project will extend Station Boulevard into the Route 59 Commuter Station Parking Lot, adding a traffic signal at the intersection of Station Boulevard and Meridian Lake Drive and new access points to Meridian Lake Drive. This upgrade will give drivers more options for exiting the parking lot during peak evening commute times. In addition, the Pace bus staging area will be moved, and parking will be reconfigured to add another 440 parking spaces in the lot.

The additional intersections are expected to reduce congestion and idling cars and buses, making bus routes to the station more efficient for regular commuters. Meanwhile, the 440 new parking spaces are expected to allow more commuters to take public transportation into Chicago rather than driving on the tollways.

With work beginning in early spring, major construction should be completed by late fall.

The majority of the project will be paid for with Air Quality grants from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Other major construction projects that will begin or continue in the 2016 season include:

The Illinois Tollway Authority has scheduled the **Farnsworth Avenue Bridge** crossing I-88 for rehabilitation this year. The project will include new ramps, added traffic signals, and a wider bridge with turn lanes and a multi-use path. Drivers should note that the two-year project will require lane closures on Farnsworth Avenue and changing traffic patterns with increased travel times through the area. For updates visit www.illinoistollway.com.

Improvements at the **Highland Avenue and Sullivan Road Intersection** will begin in late spring, adding a single lane roundabout to improve traffic flow during both peak commute hours and less heavily traveled hours of the day. The intersection will be closed for six weeks during the summer to expedite construction, which is expected to take between ten and 12 weeks.

City crews will begin replacing the **Sheffer Road Bridge** this spring. During construction, Sheffer Road will be closed to thru traffic from Farnsworth Avenue to Felten Road. Crews will also be replacing more than 2,700 feet of water main and bringing new service to the area. The bridge will reopen this fall.

Work will begin this spring to create more parking spaces and better traffic flow at the Route 59 Metra Station in Aurora.

Work resumes this spring on the **Ohio Street Bridge** crossing the BNSF railroad tracks. The bridge dates back to 1922, and will be replaced with a wider two-lane structure that includes a multi-use path that meets new, higher railroad clearance requirements. Construction is anticipated to be completed this fall.

Work also continues this spring on the **Ogden Avenue Overpass** that will cross the Canadian National Railroad to relieve train-related traffic congestion. The overpass project also include a sidewalk and multi-use path, new traffic signals, and noise abatement walls. Work is expected to be complete late this fall.

In addition, smaller projects, including new sewer installation along 4th Street and Sheridan Road, plus annual neighborhood resurfacing programs, will continue throughout the construction season. For more in depth and timely information on projects, go to ***www.aurora-il.org/construction.***