

Dear Friends and Neighbors

Greetings! In my first weeks as your new Mayor, I am touched by the energy I have observed in our community and the energy I have felt from my fellow Maplewood residents. It started with the oath of Office ceremony held January 6, 2006 at City Hall for Council member Erik Hjelle and myself. Over 150 people filled the Council chambers and lobby of City Hall to watch as Vadnais Heights Council member Laura Dobozenki acted as the Master of Ceremonies and U.S. District Judge Donovan Frank administered the oath of office. It was standing room only! **City Hall was filled with energy, enthusiasm and excitement.**

Where does this excitement come from? How can we keep this excitement alive? It is my belief that the heart and soul of a great and vibrant Maplewood is the passionate, active volunteers in our community. Some of these citizens serve on the various Boards and Commissions, some work tirelessly on specific projects, others volunteer with our police, fire, or parks department. Some simply send e-mails or faithfully call their elected officials, alerting them to issues of concern or ideas for the community. The council and I depend on these volunteers, their passions, their insight, their constructive criticism, to help us keep our ears to the ground and our finger on the pulse of Maplewood.

There are many issues in Maplewood that I am passionate about. **At the top of the list is the preservation of our parks and public open spaces.** As a little girl, I grew up in a house located in the north woods on a lake. Many a day was spent tromping around the woods with my younger brother, dreaming up science projects or splashing through the water, catching minnows with bread crumbs and a sieve, while our cats anxiously waited on the shore for a light lunch.

While I don't live in the country today, I carry the values of my childhood with me every day. I appreciate how important it is for a first ring suburb to guard their parks and public open spaces jealousy and preserve them for future generations. I am not the only one who feels this way. Have you seen the articles in the Pioneer Press and the Star Tribune that state the "value of open space is affirmed"? However, to those of us in

Maplewood this is old news. Previous Councils had the foresight to adopt the notion that the restoration and management of natural resources is a primary focus of the Neighborhood Preserve Program and that these Preserves were set aside by and for the citizens of Maplewood to preserve natural resources, scenic areas, and landscape buffers. Maplewood citizens were active then to bring the public open space referendum to reality and to set aside these lands. Today, Maplewood citizens from all walks of life, continue to reaffirm that they share a common vision for Maplewood. This vision includes the preservation of our parks and public open spaces for future generations and a commitment that we **remain ever vigilant in protecting these lands from the "butcher block" as redevelopment pressures are felt on our neighborhoods.**

In our Council's first month, we have had some growing pains. However, growing pains lead to positive growth and development. I think it is safe to say that we have nearly everyone on board in our efforts to disclose more of the inner workings of our City government. Already in the first weeks, our City Manager, Mr. Fursman, has brought to light information never seen by the public eye before. This is an exciting change indeed! In the coming weeks, we as your Council will be openly discussing public policy initiatives important to Maplewood as well as how **we can better use the tools of technology to communicate with our citizens.** Perhaps you have an idea to share with us?

In addition to keeping our finger on the pulse of Maplewood, my Council and I also need to keep our finger on the pulse of other communities, governmental agencies, and regional issues. To that end, each of us volunteer to represent Maplewood on various committees and organizations outside of Maplewood. To name a few, Council member Jueneman will continue to represent Maplewood on the Ramsey County 800 MHz committee, Council member Rossbach will continue to work on transportation issues, Council members Hjelle and Bartol represent Maplewood on the Joint Ice Arena Board, and I as Mayor need to be just about everywhere. All meetings

are open to the public and we invite you to attend these meetings and watch your government in action.

As the Mayor of Maplewood and a community leader, I want to hear from you on how we can better serve Maplewood to promote an open and transparent government that welcomes citizen input and participation. As U.S. District Judge Frank stated at the recent Oath of Office ceremony, "Open access to government is important. . . . These are complex times we live in. What we have in common as citizens is the right to expect that people will be treated with dignity and respect. Whether you're a so called important person, or "fat cat", or if you're the small person down the street, dignity and respect is what really built this country".

In the big picture, the Council and the City administrative staff are here to serve you and your family. **After all, the citizens are the City.**

Call me: 651.774.1490 or send a message: mayorlongrie@yahoo.com or attend the monthly Mayor's Forum.
Best Regards,
Diana Longrie, Mayor



P.S. Be active in your community, vote in the **special election, February 28, 2006!**

Free Tax Help

Maplewood Community Center and AARP are providing free electronic filing of Federal and Minnesota tax

returns, Rent Credit and Property Tax refunds. You don't have to be a member of the Community Center or AARP to

use this service. Trained and annually tested volunteers are available Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, 9:00 am until Noon, on a walk in basis, February 6 through April 15. This service is intended for Senior Citizens and low income individuals. The Maplewood Community Center is located at 2100 White Bear Avenue, for directions, call 651.249.2100 x0.

