

This City of Portsmouth Community Newsletter includes information about City-sponsored events, projects and special announcements. Visit www.cityofportsmouth.com to join the distribution list, or be removed. – *City Manager John P. Bohenko*

EVENT TONIGHT

Author Kelly Link will read from “Pretty Monsters,” her new collection of short stories with fantastical elements, at 7 p.m. tonight in the Library’s Levenson Room at an event co-sponsored with RiverRun Bookstore. Link’s stories have won three Nebula, a Hugo, and a World Fantasy Award. Contact: 427-1540.

CHRISTMAS TREES

Christmas trees will be collected from the curbside through next Friday, Jan. 16, on the same day that trash and recyclables are picked up. Residents also may bring Christmas trees to the Recycling Center for disposal anytime. For Recycling Center hours and more info, see www.cityofportsmouth.com/publicworks/solidwaste-recycle-rc.htm.

CDBG INPUT SOUGHT

The Citizens Advisory Committee is seeking ideas for new Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects at a hearing tomorrow (Thursday, Jan. 8) at 6 p.m. in City Hall Conference Room A. The information will be used to develop the 2009-2010 CDBG Annual Plan and Budget. CDBG projects must benefit Portsmouth families who earn very low, low and moderate incomes. CDBG funding also can be used to carry out projects in neighborhoods where more than half of the residents earn low or moderate incomes, and to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. For more info or to offer input, contact: 610-7226.

COMMERCIAL LOADING ZONE PERMIT

The City Council will hold a public hearing next Monday (Jan. 12) on a proposed ordinance to establish a \$25 commercial loading zone permit for non-commercial and unmarked vehicles to use commercial loading zones, just as commercial vehicles and non-commercial vehicles marked for commercial purposes do now. The one-year permits would be applicable to a single vehicle and required to be displayed on the dashboard of unmarked, non-commercial vehicles actively loading or unloading in a commercial loading zone. The City Council’s meeting begins at 7 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at City Hall. Contact: 766-1440.

SUPERINTENDENT FORUM

The three finalists in the search to replace retiring Superintendent Dr. Robert Lister will be in Portsmouth Jan. 21 to visit the Portsmouth School District schools; meet with staff, students and parents; and appear at a public forum at 7 p.m. in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at City Hall. The public is invited to attend. The forum also will be televised on Local Government Cable Channel 22. The three candidates are: Dr. Maureen Ward, assistant superintendent of schools in SAU 21 in Hampton; Ed McDonough, superintendent in Wells-Ogunquit, Maine; and Dr. Donna Harlan, superintendent in Central Berkshire, Mass. Contact: 431-5080.

CITY BUDGET

Work has begun on developing the proposed City of Portsmouth budget for Fiscal Year 2010, which begins July 1, 2009. The meeting schedule is online at www.cityofportsmouth.com/finance/budgets.htm.

MLK HOLIDAY CLOSURES

City offices, schools, the Library and the Recycling Center are closed Monday, Jan. 19, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. However, curbside collection of rubbish and recyclables continues as usual, including in the business district.

INAUGURATION DAY

The Library’s Levenson Room will be open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, for people to watch the televised inauguration of new President Barack Obama on the large viewing screen. Stay all day or a few minutes. The Oath of Office Swearing-In Ceremony takes place at noon. Contact: 427-1540.

WELFARE THANK-YOU

The Welfare Department would like to thank all the generous citizens who contributed gift cards for their needy neighbors this holiday season. The prospect of some extras -- such as a haircut, a special gift, or a trip to the movies -- brought tears to the eyes of many recipients. Thank you all for your thoughtfulness.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE

The next Middle School dance at the Connie Bean Community Center is Friday (Jan. 9) from 7:30-10 p.m. It costs \$4, \$3 with Merit Card. Open to all PMS students/Portsmouth residents. Contact: 766-1483.

CHRONICLES OF YARNIA

Teens who like to knit or crochet, or just want to learn, are invited to participate in yarn-related activities going on at the Library's Youth Activity Room this Friday afternoon (Jan. 9) and also Friday, Jan. 23, from 2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Yarn and needles will be provided but if participants have a favorite pair, or an ongoing project, they're urged to bring them along. The sessions are for those ages 12 and up. Contact: 427-1540.

FREE TAX TALKS

The Library will host two free H&R Block Tax Talks this month: "The Cost of Education is Rising Faster than Inflation" on Jan. 15 and "Show Me the Money" on Jan. 22. Both begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Hilton Garden Room. H&R Block tax experts will help you estimate how much college will cost, credits and deductions to look into, financial aid ins and outs, and explain education funding accounts on Jan. 15. "Show Me the Money" on Jan. 22 will outline frequently overlooked tax deductions, such as medical expenses, job search costs and student loan interest. Contact: 427-1540.

FREE TAX HELP

The AARP's Tax Aide Program will offer free tax preparation help by trained tax specialists beginning Tuesday, February 3, and continuing through April 14 on Tuesday evenings from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Library's MacLeod Room. Tax Aide volunteers are trained by the Internal Revenue Service. Contact: 427-1540.

FAMOUS POET

World-famous poet Charles Simic will be at the Library for a reading and signing on January 27. The event co-sponsored with RiverRun Bookstore begins at 7 p.m. It's free, but come early for good seats. Simic, a former U.S. Poet Laureate and retired UNH professor, will read from his latest two books of poetry: "Sixty Poems" and "That Little Something." Contact: 427-1540.

MOVIE NIGHTS RETURN

The Library's Thursday evening Movie Nights return on January 29 with the 2008 comedy "Ghost Town" starring Ricky Gervais and Greg Kinnear. The PG-13 movie begins at 7 p.m. in the Levenson Room and runs for one hour and 42 minutes. Contact: 427-1540.

LEARN A NEW GAME

Interested in learning something new in 2009? Consider Mah Jongg, the ancient Chinese game of tiles. It takes only 15 minutes to learn this fast and free game that's fun for all ages. It's taught every week at the Library's Hilton Garden Room at 10 a.m. and play continues until noon. Contact Dianne Ameen at 785-4256 or via ameen388@hotmail.com.

POOL, SPINNAKER MEMBERSHIPS

The Indoor Pool and Spinnaker Point Adult Recreation Center are renewing memberships for the new year. Stop by either facility for membership information; see www.cityofportsmouth.com/recreation/programs-10.htm for Indoor Pool info and www.cityofportsmouth.com/recreation/programs-8.htm for Spinnaker membership info; or call the Pool at 427-1545 or Spinnaker at 766-1483.

RECYCLING STICKERS

Residents may obtain free 2009 Recycling Center stickers at the Recycling Center on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. by filling out an application and showing proof of residency. Stickers are issued on an annual basis and must be placed on the driver's side window. Contact: 427-1530.

PHS SPORTS

The link to the Portsmouth High athletic schedules is at www.cityofportsmouth.com/school/phs/athlsch.htm.

BOARD AND COMMISSION VACANCIES

To see the most recent list of openings on the City's volunteer boards and commissions, visit www.cityofportsmouth.com/cityclerk/boardscommissions.htm.

SNOWSTORM INFO

If the City decides to ban on-street parking to facilitate snow removal, it will be announced by e-mail to Community Newsletter subscribers, on Cable Channel 22, on a recording on the snow phone at 766-7669 (SNO-SNOW), at www.cityofportsmouth.com, in the local media and on signs at all entrances to the City. A map of parking lots open during bans is at www.cityofportsmouth.com/transportation/snowbanparkinglots.htm. Portsmouth residents also may obtain coupons from the Parking Office at City Hall (open 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.) to pay just \$3 if they park at the High-Hanover Parking Garage.

Mark your calendar...(2 items)

The Rec Department's annual Father-Daughter Valentine's Dance is Saturday, Feb. 7, at the Connie Bean Center. The Library will host a three-part seminar on "Buying a Condo: Everything You Need to Know" on Feb. 12, 19 and 26.

Did you know...

In the event of a major storm such as a Northeast blizzard, hurricane or other emergency, the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) can be activated, as it was during the recent ice storm. Residents can call 427-1580 for information on shelters, evacuations and to seek assistance with weather-related problems. The EOC is only staffed during a major event. For questions during non-emergency periods, contact the Fire Department at 427-1515.

MEETINGS: To see a list of upcoming City-related meetings, agendas for future meetings and minutes of past meetings, always check the City's Web site, www.CityofPortsmouth.com, or the Meetings Calendar at www.cityofportsmouth.com/calendar/2009/index.htm.

HOURS: Portsmouth City Hall (431-2000) is open from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. The School Department Central Office (431-5080) is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Library hours are: 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday; 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday; and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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