

BELVIEW BULLETIN

JULY 2011

After the storm...by Lori Ryer

Three weeks has past since we experienced what was initially thought to be straight-line winds. A few days after the storm NOAA confirmed that it was an F! tornado that actually passed through town. Straight-line winds or tornado? Whatever the experts choose to call it we have been dealing with a huge mess ever since.

Now we find ourselves dealing with insurance agents and adjusters, contractors and tree removal companies. It has been noted that once the trees that are still standing have been cut down we will have lost approximately 60 percent or more of our trees. Many a home has lost their beloved shade trees. The silhouette of town looks quite different than just a short while ago. It looks as if our water tower grew as it is much more visible over the tree tops than it once was. John Buckley of Redwood Nursery has offered to come to town to help determine which boulevard and other city owned trees still need to come down. Once that happens we will be contracting with a tree removal company to remove the trees and grind the stumps in preparation of getting a start on replanting trees whose shade will be enjoyed by future generations.

Working with the City's insurance adjuster it has become apparent that most of the city's buildings have received at least minor damage. We are sure that more things will be noticed as time goes on. The city has excellent coverage through the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust. With that being said there are some items that just are not able to be covered. Included in the un-insurable list include damage done to our streets during the storm clean-up; damage done to our city sidewalks where boulevard trees were ripped out of the ground; also not covered are cost associated with the removal and replanting of city trees that are further away than 100 feet of a covered city building; and another expense that is not able to be covered is the cost of cleaning out of the storm drains that have since been filled with debris. While these items are not covered by city insurance due to the amount of damage sustained in Belview, Redwood County and the state of Minnesota as a whole during the storm we should be eligible for federal assistance for a large percentage of these uninsured items once a Presidential Disaster Declaration has been passed. The assistance will be for public owned property only, not individual homes. Apparently the threshold for uninsured private property was not meet in order to qualify.

The City would like to take this time to warn homeowners of storm-chasing contractors. Of course we are not talking about our local contractors who we know well and trust. While most if not all of the contractors doing work in the area since the storm are legitimate we would suggest that you do not agree to a contract without checking the references of those whom you do not know. I spoke with a representative from the Department of Labor's Residential Contractors Division 651-284-5069 and he said that all you need is a contractor's legal business name and/or their license number when you call.

Reflecting back on the time period immediately following the storm and during the days of clean-up that followed it can be noted that while our pretty little town does not look the same the one thing that remains unchanged is the spirit of the people. If it was not for all of the amazing people who pitched in to help with the clean-up we would not be where we are at. The list of volunteers is long and there is no way to even begin to list individual names. Many an individual worked tirelessly to help clean-up the streets, the parks, or their neighbor's property before they took the time to take care of their own property. Many donated their time and equipment, some donated food and/or helped to prepare and feed the volunteers. While there was food donated by the American Legion, the Coffee Tavern and the Belview Learning Center along with a few individuals, the remaining food and beverages were purchased through the Local Emergency Fund (thanks to those that have supported that fund in the past.)

Thanks to all that adhered to the request to limit access in and out of town and the limiting of driving around town during the power outage. This was not done to inconvenience anyone but was done at the request of the public that attended the town meetings. It was also done at the request of Xcel Energy who were able to move about more easily in town while they were trying to restore our power. They noted afterwards that due to the extra efforts taken on part of the people of Belview, they were able to restore power more quickly. With loads of trees and branches being hauled down our streets on a constant basis for days and the downed power lines, it was just not a safe environment for those who just wanted to get a look at the damage.

All in all I still marvel that no one was injured in the storm or in the days of clean-up that followed. While most structures in town received at least minor damage some received major damage including our beloved Parkview Nursing Home. Parkview has since been flooded twice with heavy rains. Twenty five residents were evacuated immediately after the storm to area care centers. The staff along with the Redwood County Sheriff's Department, North Ambulance, Cottonwood Ambulance and Theilen Bus Service and local volunteers did awesome job of taking care of our residents. Since then 65 staff have been temporarily laid off from work. It is the plan to be up and running again by November 1, 2011. We hope that our residents and staff all are able to return home as soon as possible.

The City along with Parkview Home had emergency plans in place in the event of a disaster but to be honest much of those plans actually went out the window rather quickly. When preparing emergency plans you rarely have to take into account that all the neighboring towns have also been affected. City leaders, City Maintenance, along with members of the Belview Fire Department and First Responders that responded and the Parkview staff did an outstanding job. Are there things that we would do differently if we are ever faced with a disaster of this magnitude or worse? Yes, but with that being said I am mighty proud of the leadership we have. I think they did an excellent job. I am proud to say I am from a caring community that pulls together when the going gets tough.